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LIFTING HIS EYES, LORD MARINDIN SEES ONCE MORE THE WOMAN WHOSE FACE HAD LIVED IN HIS MEMORY FOR TWO YEARS.

MARIAN ORMOND'S TRIAL.

[A NOVELETTE.]

PROLOGUE

In a fashionable part of Paris, near the Rue St. Honoré, stands a large white mansion, of an elegant and imposing appearance; possessed of several suites of lofty rooms, gaily, even richly, furnished, with, however, the perfect taste peculiar to the Gaul.

It is the *école*, or educational establishment of Monsieur and Madame Léon, a couple of Parisians of the *bourgeoisie* class, who by dint of hard work, unflinching energy, craft, and a certain amount of cleverness, have worked their way up until they are the possessors of one of the most flourishing schools in the gay capital of France.

Their pupils are composed entirely of the daughters of the nobility, and those of persons of wealth and rank, not only of their own country.

Several English and American girls study under

the eminent pastors and masters at Madame Léon's as well as French demoiselles. All are more or less beautiful and interesting, but undoubtedly the belle of the school is Adrienne de Sormis, the only child of Raoul, Comte de Sormis—a man whose blood is blue, who belongs to the old noblesse, who figures in the world of Paris as a fashionable man, and is supposed to be wealthy, but who, in reality, is poor—so poor that it is with difficulty he scrapes together money enough to pay for his daughter's education.

He manages to do so, and to give her a cheque occasionally for dress, by living in private in a mean, sordid way; dining at third rate *cafés* off doubtful-made dishes and cheap wines, living on the fourth floor in small rooms, and omitting with praiseworthy perseverance to pay his tailor's bills, or indeed any bill that is presented to him.

He is handsome, wonderfully so, notwithstanding that more than fifty years have passed over his head, and his manners are polished and fascinating to the last degree.

But there is a want of sincerity about him, a restless glitter about the full dark eye, too firm a curve in the well-cut mouth to make him

altogether pleasant to look at or reliable as a friend.

And, truth to tell, the Comte de Sormis has few—wofully few—friends. Acquaintances plentifully, especially among people who have no handle to their names, and who love a lord or the possessor of a title, but among his own set he is somewhat shunned and avoided.

There are queer tales afloat to the effect that the Comte displays a little too much dexterity in manipulating the dice-box, and is singularly lucky at cards.

In fact, some bold spirits declare that he adds to his slender income by unfair means, and as the said bold spirits are frequenters of card-rooms and gambling *cafés*, they possibly know something about it.

Still he manages, despite these disadvantages, to hold his own, and enjoys himself in a way.

Raoul de Sormis is not altogether a bad man; there are a few green places in his heart still, though dissipation and want of money are fast searing and withering them.

One good trait is his love for his daughter. He is having her trained for a public singer, as her mother—a fair English girl he met in London

and loved, and who as his wife brightened his life for a few years—had been; not without some qualms of conscience, some bitter regrets, that the last, the very last scion of his old, blue-blooded race, should have to sing for hire.

Yet he is getting old, his debts grow day by day, and his reputation as a fortunate card player is increasing; so there is nothing for it but to let Addrienne make money out of the glorious voice she has inherited from her English mother.

He cannot starve in his old age, and knows that with her singular beauty she is certain to be a success.

"Tell me, my very dear one, that this profession for which you are training is to your liking?"

"Dear father, you know it is."

Father and child are walking in the spacious garden at the back of the Léons' house.

The soft April wind stirs the dark purple foliage of the beech, and rustles amid the birches, trails of beautiful flowers that droop like branches of waving gold, and bears on its wings the perfume of violets.

The sun smiles down on the trim daisy-decked lawn, its warm gleams lighting up the yellow celandine, and blue forget-me-nots, and making a sort of halo round Addrienne's fair head.

"You would not like to give it up now? to relinquish the idea of some day becoming a Jenny Lind or a Titiens?" he goes on after awhile, looking at her keenly.

"No, indeed," she answers gaily, lifting the large brown eyes—so like and yet so unlike his own—to his face.

"I should be very—very sorry to give up my singing—my prospects of some day being a celebrity."

"Little vanity!" he murmurs.

"And have I got something to be vain about, dear father? Monsieur de Solnac told me only this morning that my upper notes are perfect, and madam says the kindest things in the world about my voice."

"Indeed," responded the Comte; "are Monsieur and Madam Léon as kind as ever?"

"Yes, quite, I think I have more privileges and more freedom than any other girl in the school."

Which is certainly the case, Addrienne is madam Léon's especial pet, and is spoiled by the crafty designing woman, who has a base end in view.

The Comte has impressed them with a sense of his own wealth, rank, and importance knowing full well that the daughter of a rich man, or a supposed rich man, will receive far more care and attention than the daughter of a needy and disreputable gamester. He manages entirely to deceive the Léons, and by the help of the cheque-books of an extremely wealthy, but low-born silk merchant (who lends him anything and everything, even considerable sums of money, in order to induce the Comte to walk arm-in-arm with him in the "Bois" or the Champs Elysées), which he leaves about, and pretends to forget, leaving them in a conspicuous place on Madame's table, gives them the idea that he is in affluent circumstances. This, coupled with the fact that Addrienne is the daughter of a long line of titled ancestors, makes Madame Léon endeavour to bring about a marriage between her pupil and her eldest son, Adolphe, a young man of great personal beauty and fascinating manners; but at heart like his mother, cruel, crafty, and designing—a man without morals or good feeling, selfish, indolent and extravagant.

He has given his parents a vast amount of trouble almost from the time of his birth, and owing to his extravagant ways, love of display and recklessness, had been a drain on their income, and a constant source of anxiety to them. Therefore nothing would please Madame Léon more than to entrap the daughter of a wealthy noble into a marriage with her scapegrace son.

She has heard some rumours that are not much to the credit of the Comte, but she gives little heed to them, being blinded and dazzled by his grand airs, and assumption of dignity and importance. Besides, she reasons, if Blanche be

penurious, her magnificent voice is almost as good as an estate, and would bring in a good income, so she steadily encourages the young girl's admiration of Adolphe's handsome face, and throw them constantly into each other's society, and leads her on slowly, but surely, to regard him in the light of a lover.

Addrienne, inexperienced and impressionable, romantic as girls of seventeen usually are, easily becomes the dupe and victim of those who plot and scheme her undoing, and yielding to the young man's passionate appeals, has promised, ere long, to become his wife.

As she stands in the flower-filled garden by her father's side, her thoughts are full of the man who is to be her husband, and of the bright future that lies before her, when as his wife and a well-known singer she can heap riches and luxuries on him. She does not love him really—truly. It is only the gratified vanity of extreme youth that stirs in her heart; and if the father, who, whatever his faults, loves her dearly, knew of it, he could with a few words show her the rashness and folly of the step she proposes to take. But, unfortunately, he knows nothing of the honour so soon to be done him. Adolphe, with his sophistry and flattery, has persuaded her to keep silent, telling her that his heart will be broken, his life wrecked and blasted, if the Comte objects to their union, and takes her from him; and Addrienne, somewhat alarmed by his passion and vehemence, promises to do as he bids, and leave the disclosing of their matrimonial intentions until after the fatal knot is tied.

"You are quite happy, then?" continued Raoul de Sormis, as they take another turn under the golden-branched birches. "You would not care to leave Madame Léon's just at present?"

"Leave! Oh, no father," responds the girl, quickly, a frightened look in her brown eyes. "There is no necessity for me to leave, is there?"

"Not at present, unless you wish it. I thought, though, you wished to go to Milan to study under Signor Tessémano and Cavallo for a few months? And there is nothing, I think, like a residence in Italy, and a careful course of training under Italian masters for improving the voice."

"I did a year ago, but now—now," she falters, "I don't really think that it is necessary—not at all necessary. Monsieur de Solnac is such an excellent master, and I have the benefit of Madame Léon's experience when I am practising, and that is a great advantage, as she has much taste in musical matters—used to be a good vocalist herself—and gives me many hints with regard to expression, and proper production of the notes."

"Yes; still I think the Italians alone possess the art of teaching that wonderful tenderness of expression, that soft, piano delivery, which is noticeable in all who have resided for a while in the sunny south, and prosecuted their studies there."

"Do you, really?"

"I do, indeed."

"Then you think that I shall not be a finished singer unless I go there?"

"I don't exactly say that, but I think it would improve you."

"And make my chances of success greater?"

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"Yet I hardly think I need go. I have made wonderful progress during the last six months; besides," she added, quickly, a flush rising to her cheek, a light to her soft, dark eyes, "think what a great expense it would be to you. The journey, my apartments, my board; and then these famous masters ask such exorbitant prices for even a single lesson."

"True; still I don't mind that, *chérie*," he replies, letting his eyes dwell fondly on the lovely face—so innocent, so charming—of his only child, "if the—"

"I mind, though," she breaks in, eagerly, forgetting her natural timidity in her dreadful anxiety not to be sent away. "I am sure now that you make no end of sacrifices for me, deny yourself many things, and I cannot be a greater

burden to you, dear father, a greater expense than I am."

"I don't mind that in the least," he repeats, kindly, "if the expenditure would conduce to your success in the profession you are going to adopt, and make you gain more fame and renown."

"It would not do that. It—it is not necessary, I think," stammer Addrienne, turning from red to white, and white to red in her fear that her father will send her away from Paris just on the eve of her bridal.

"You are really of that opinion?" he queries, seriously. "You really think that you are getting on very well, and do not require other instructors?"

"I do, indeed," she acquiesces, earnestly, "and I am sure that if I went away, and was surrounded entirely by strangers, I should not get on half so well. I should be miserably unhappy and depressed, disinclined to study, or take any interest in my work, and should retrograde instead of improve. It is wretched to be quite alone in a foreign country, father, is it not?"

"Well, perhaps so, my dear, to a young girl."

"It would be to me. I dread going among strangers, and leaving all those I love here in France."

Tears stand in her starry eyes as she speaks; there is a piteous little quiver about the rosy, curved lips, and the Comte as he sees it rejoins good-humouredly,—

"Very well, stay here, then, if that pleases you best. I don't want you to do anything that would make you unhappy."

"Oh, thanks, dear father," she cries, joyfully, clasping her hands with delight at having gained his consent to her remaining at the Pension where her worthless lover dwells, "it will please me best to stay here."

"That is settled then. What changeable creatures you women are," he continues, looking at her with a keenness in his glance which brings the bright colour into her delicate cheeks with a burning wave; "in less than a year to alter all your plans, ideas, and wishes so entirely. I wonder how the world would get on if men were like you! In a curious fashion, I imagine."

"Curious, perhaps, but nice all the same. A year ago my voice was undeveloped, and I thought it necessary to go to Italy. Now, however, I have made so much progress that I do not consider it necessary," she concludes, with a demure little voice.

"Oh, indeed, that is satisfactory," he remarks, laughingly. "At any rate, little one, I hope you will win both fame and gold."

"Thanks! I hope I shall," she answers softly, "for your sake, and Adolphe's," she murmurs to herself, continuing aloud; "then I shall be able to repay you all you have spent on my education."

"Don't speak of that, *chérie*," he says, with much tenderness, for he feels just a wee bit guilty. He has heard her declare, with no little relief, that she does not wish to leave Paris; for though he is willing and ready to do all in his power for the welfare of the only being on earth whom he loves, still he knows that a journey to, and residence in, the south would be a terrible drain on his slender resources, and reduce him to almost abject poverty.

"But I must speak of it, I can never thank you enough."

"Don't try, my child."

"I can't persuade my little girl to leave you, Madame Léon," he goes on, as that lady steps through the long French window on to the trim daisy-pied lawn, and comes towards them, her rich silk gown, one of Worth's masterpieces, put on in honour of the Comte's visit, trailing half a yard behind her, and rustling noisily as the moves along with majestic mien and imposing stateliness, fair without and false within, from the crown of her elaborately dressed head, with its adornments of costly lace lappets, to the sole of her lavishly embroidered bedgown.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, I am afraid you have made too much of her."

"Why?"

"Because she is so loth to leave you, refuses to do so. That looks as though she was a pet here—quite spoilt, in fact."

"That would be impossible, monsieur," replied madame, with an airy wave of her podgy beringed white hands, and a gracious bend of her elaborate head and stout body. "Mam'selle Addrienne is too good, too *anglaise*, too *aimable* to be spoilt. Nothing could alter or warp so sweet and docile a disposition," and Madame gives another stately bend of the lace lappets, another wave of the podgy fingers, and shoots, meanwhile, a sharp glance at father and child, wondering what they have been talking about.

"You flatter me, do me too much honour, praising my child so much," murmurs the Comte, in his best style, accompanying the words with such a sweep and flourish of his hat, that it almost touches the ground. "I trust she deserves it."

"She more than deserves it. No praise could be too high—too great for her. She is my best pupil."

"Thanks, thanks, madame," again murmurs de Sormis.

"Is there any reason why mademoiselle should leave us?" queries the arch-conspirator, letting none of the uneasiness she feels appear on her carefully preserved, skillfully made-up face. "Is Monsieur le Comte not satisfied with the progress mademoiselle has made?"

"Quite, quite, madame, I assure you," he rejoins, hastily, not wishing to offend her. "Only some time back, Addrienne expressed a wish to go to Milan, and to-day I asked her if she still wished it."

"I don't think it necessary now, madame, do," ventures the young girl, timidly, not daring to lift her eyes to the crafty woman's face, only fixing them intently on the tip of her richly embroidered *bodéquin*.

"By no means, my dearest," she answers promptly. "De Sormis is from the Conservatoire, and is one of their best masters. He is more than satisfied with your progress, and so am I. It is quite wonderful the advance you have made during the past year. Your voice is rounder, more flexible; your upper notes clearer and stronger, your production of it becomes better day by day. I may safely say that you will soon be perfect, soon be ready to appear before the public." This was a little exaggeration on the part of Léon's *mère*, but being one of those people who think everything is fair in love and war, she saw no reason why she should not use any means, no matter how dishonourable, to gain her end. "So, unless Monsieur wishes it, there is no necessity, no reason why you should leave us, and the additional expense he incurred," she concludes, craftily, with a second sharp glance at the Comte.

"I do not wish it, madame. I feel sure she could not be in better hands," he replies, gallantly, with another terrific flourish of his rakish hat.

"Thank you, thank you." "No, it is for me to thank you for all the tenderness and care you have bestowed upon my daughter. I feel the debt is so great that I shall never be able to pay it."

"Monsieur is too kind," simpers Gabrielle Léon, and she heaves a sigh of relief five minutes later when De Sormis, after kissing his child on either cheek, takes his leave with many polite and pretty speeches and many flourishes of his hat and hands.

"What have you and your father been talking about, Addrienne?" she demands, when he was gone.

"About my going to Milan chiefly."

"And what else?"

"Of the chances of my succeeding in the musical profession."

"And what besides?"

"Nothing else, I think, madame."

"Don't think, be sure."

"I'm sure," rejoins the young girl, shrinking, for her interlocutor's voice is sharp and abrupt, quite different from the soft, sweet tones she adopted for the Comte's benefit.

"You spoke of nothing else?"

"No."

"Not a word about your—your intended marriage?"

"No, madame," returns Mademoiselle De Sormis, naively. "You told me not to."

"That is quite right. There is nothing I dislike," continues Madame Léon, with a severe, and virtuous expression, "more than concealing anything from a parent, but in this case it is absolutely necessary to conceal everything from your father."

"Why?" demands Addrienne, timidly.

"Because he is a great noble, rich and powerful—the riches and power exist only in madame's imagination. She has persuaded herself that he is one of the wealthy old nobles, and nothing save a perfect avalanche of facts will disabuse her mind of the erroneous impression it had received—"with blue blood in his veins, and a pedigree dating back to the Carolingian days, while Adolphe is my son, the son of a woman who has risen from the people, and who, moreover is not ashamed to own it!" this was announced in a grandiloquent style that was highly ludicrous, with the usual wave of his podgy hands. "He has no blue blood in his veins, no long line of titled ancestors, no great heritage. He is simply one of nature's gentlemen (heaven save the mark!) without lands or pedigree, and he loves you madly, devotedly. Does he not?"

"I—I think so," falters the young girl, blushing rosily.

"You think so? Do you not know that he adores you?" demands his mother, sternly.

"He says so," agreed her companion, with a fresh accession of naivete.

"He not only says it, he does it," continues the elder woman, impressively, wishing her victim to be overwhelmed by the amount of love lavished on her.

"Yes."

"And I begin to think that you do not properly appreciate, or hold at its true worth, my boy's affection for you!"

"Indeed I do, madame," expostulates Addrienne, thinking of the passionate appeals and vehement declarations to which she had so recently listened, and which have made her consent to keep her intended marriage a secret from the Comte.

"And you love him?"

"Oh, yes!" she acknowledges, with charming confusion and many blushes.

"That is well. Your love must carry you through a great deal, for your father naturally expects you to marry one of his own order—a noble of high degree—and may be angry at first when he hears that you have preferred love to grandeur, and have married a man with little or no money, no title, nothing, in fact, to recommend him to you save his deep absorbing affection, which is as great as ever man lavished on woman."

Crafty Gabrielle Léon knows that is her trump card and plays it, being well aware that the innocent young girl before her will be flattered at being the object of such a grand passion.

"Yes," murmured Addrienne, "he will be angry at first, but he will forgive me after, will he not?"

"Of course he will," assents her companion, "and you will be happier with Adolphe than you would be with any other man."

"Yes, oh yes."

"But, madame," she falters a minute later, as a thought strikes her, "if my father does not know of my marriage, how can we obtain his consent, which is necessary, is it not, to legalise it?"

"Who told you it was necessary?" demands madame, sharply.

"I—I hardly know; hardly remember."

"One of those chattering girls from Marseilles, I suppose!"

"Yes," acknowledges the young *fanée*, reluctantly. "I think it was Aimée Vielleberty."

"Chut," returns Gabrielle Léon, grimly, "she knows too much."

"But she is going to be married herself next summer," expostulates Addrienne, "and she

told me that it would not be legal unless both her parents consent. Is that not so?"

"It may be down where she lives; it is not needed here."

"Really? She was not right, then?"

"No, decidedly wrong," rejoins madame, untruthfully and telling the lie boldly, for she knows that the Comte's consent can never be obtained by fair means, and that it will therefore be necessary to make her victim believe that it can be done without.

"I am glad of that."

"So am I," remarks her companion.

"For I don't think my father would give his consent just now."

"No, neither do I, and you need not be afraid, my dear one. I will see that everything is quite correct, and that you are legally married to my boy."

And then the crafty woman paces up and down the sunlit garden, under the purple-foiled beeches, using all the eloquence she is possessed of to persuade and convince Addrienne; and it is an easy task, she is so childlike and innocent, so utterly ignorant with regard to the laws of her country, that her marriage would be legal without the consent of her father.

This is not so, and madame knew it well enough, but she also knew that when the Comte heard of the affair that he would be only too glad to give his consent to her being re-married, made a legal wife, to avoid a horrible scandal, and silence wagging tongues.

"What are you doing?" demands Madame Léon, sharply, some seven or eight days later, as she enters her own particular private room and finds Adolphe seated before her bureau, which he has taken the liberty of opening with skeleton keys, and the contents of which are littered about the floor.

"What are you doing?" she reiterates, as he takes not the smallest notice of her remark or presence.

"Looking over your papers," he rejoins, coolly.

"What for? How dare you open my places? I won't have it."

"You can't stop me!"

"Yes I can, and I will too."

"No, you can't, so don't excite yourself," and he leans back in his chair and looks up at her angry face, with a sardonic smile on his handsome mouth.

For a moment or two mother and son regard each other fixedly, then she says, quietly,—

"What are you looking for?"

"Is that any affair of yours?"

"Of course it is. Come, tell me, Adolphe."

"Well," he replies, slowly, "I am looking for a letter or a specimen of the Comte de Sormis's handwriting."

"What for?"

"You are curious, mother."

"Of course I am about anything that concerns him."

"Where have you put his letters?"

"Tell me what you want them for first."

"Peste," he mutters angrily, "how curious women are! I want to study his writing in order to be able to copy it."

"Copy it," she echoes.

"Yes, copy it. You seem to forget that we shall want some sort of a consent from him to produce at the Mairie."

"No, I don't," she rejoins quickly. "I have come to talk to you about it."

"That's all right, then. Bring out his letters."

And madame obeys the imperious mandate, and then the arch-conspirators scan them narrowly, and remain talking and writing for several hours, and the result of their labour is a pretty little document purporting to come from Reoul Comte de Sormis, and giving his full and free permission to the marriage of his daughter Addrienne with Adolphe Léon.

"Good thing he's gone to England for a while," says the young man, as he finishes his task; "it will make it easier for us to mislead and hoodwink all parties."

"Yes," agrees his mother. "I don't think we shall meet with any difficulties."

And they do not. Three weeks after the signing of the civil contract Addrienne becomes the wife of Adolphe Léon, all obstacles being smoothed over by the help of the forged document, and ere many days are passed she realises what a fearful mistake, what an awful error, she has made. Once married and in his power, the schemer, who has become her master, shows himself in his true colours, and shocks her refined delicacy with his coarse brutality and low manners. There is no one to stand between them. Madame "won't interfere between husband and wife," she says, smiling suavely, and the young girl is utterly at his mercy—utterly helpless and powerless.

She longs for her father to come to hear as she has never longed before, yearning to hear his voice and see his face, and be greeted with the never-failing tenderness which he has invariably shown her. She has written to him, but no answer reaches her. What is the meaning of his strange silence? she wonders.

Why does he not write, he who loves her so well, who has always been, no matter what his faults to others, so unforgivingly kind and tender to her? She racks her brain for a reason, worrying herself to a shadow, becoming thin and pale in her distress, endeavouring to find a solution to the mystery.

After a time she gathers from a word dropped by her husband, in a fit of rage, that she is a sort of prisoner, and, as the days go on, she realises her bondage more fully, and finds that all her actions are closely watched, and that it is only sometimes of an evening that she is relieved from the espionage of her cruel enemies; and a terrible despair, a blank sense of desolation, an awful agony takes possession of her soul.

She is full of an intangible fear as she stands by the window in her own little room, watching the rain as it dashes violently against the glass, and streams in torrents along the garden below, and she is so absorbed with her sad thoughts that she does not hear the door open, and is unaware anyone is in the room until her arm is roughly clutched, and, looking up, she sees her graceless husband beside her, his face black with passion, his eyes blazing furiously.

"Pauper, miserable pauper!" he hisses between his teeth. "I have found you out, and that miserable old fellow, your father!"

"What do you mean? How dare you speak of my father in such terms!" she asks, indignantly, drawing her slight form to its full height.

"Dare," he repeats, with a coarse laugh; "dare, why who wouldn't dare? He is known all over Paris as a tricky gamester, a disreputable black-leg, a ruined gentleman, who lives by his wits, who never pays a bill, who cheats and defrauds honest, hardworking folk like my mother and—"

"Oh! stop—stop!" she implores, clasping her hands. "He is my father."

"Stop—why should I stop?" he goes on brutally. "He has tricked and trapped me finely by his fraudulent representations. Here I am, tied to you—to you who haven't a brass farthing."

He is well aware that he is not tied to her, his marriage being illegal, but he does not intend to tell her so, knowing that he will have greater power over her if she believes him her husband, and it will be quite time enough, he thinks, to cast her off, if he finds she cannot make money by her slinging.

"Why did you marry me?" she asks, faintly. "Because I thought you were the daughter of a rich nobleman," he answers, with cruel distinctness; "and because I thought the marriage would be an advantage to me."

"You never loved me, then?" queries poor Addrienne, wildly.

"Loved you? Poo! All the love I have to give is bestowed elsewhere, on a very different sort of woman. I wanted luxury and comfort, and thought I'd get both with you; but that old fop, your father, has cheated and tricked me with his grand airs and other people's cheque-books. Heaven and earth—to think he has been too many

for me—for me!" And he shakes his clenched hands in the air, in his impotent rage.

"I'll make you pay for it though, my lady," he cries, savagely, dropping his hand so heavily on her shoulder that she aways under it; "you shall work like a slave, and make the money that blackleg De Sormis has cheated me of."

"How do you know he is a cheat and a black-leg?" she asks, trying to speak calmly.

"How do I know?" he repeats, a cruel smile curving his lips, a cruel light in his dark eyes; "because I have been to the miserable garret in the Rue Lor, where he lived—because I have seen the nakedness of the land, and because all his creditors were gathered, like carrion crows, around his body now that he is dead."

"Dead!" ejaculates Addrienne, in horrified surprise.

"Yes, dead; Raoul de Sormis died of heart disease two days ago, and was buried this morning in a pauper's grave."

"And you know this, and did not tell me—did not tell me go and see him!" shrieked the girl, wildly.

"No, certainly not. I exercised my right as a husband, and kept from you what I did not wish you to—"

"Oh, fiend! monster! wretch!" she wails; "what cruelty, what—"

"Here, stop that," he says, sullenly. "I'm the husband, you're only the wife. I'll teach you obedience and respect," and, lifting his hand, he strikes her a heavy blow on the mouth.

Addrienne drops like one bereft of life, and lies prone along the carpetless floor, while the brutal man who has dealt the blow, without casting one look at her, leaves the room, and turns the key on her.

The clocks in Paris are booming out twelve when consciousness returns to De Sormis's unfortunate child. At first she is bewildered and dazed; then suddenly she remembers, and a flood of tears gives some relief to her aching brain.

She feels hopeless, weary; only one thing is clear and distinct to her in her apathy of misery, and that is that she must get away, fly from the man she calls husband.

She struggles to her feet with an effort, washes the blood from her wounded, swollen lips, gathers together what little money and jewellery she possesses, and with infinite trouble and labour knots the sheets together, and placing the bed firmly on them, prepares to descend to the garden by them.

It is a dusky, rainy night.

She looks from the window all is dark, silent beneath, and with a short prayer; she steps on the sill, grasps the sheets firmly in her little hands, and slides down them with a rapidity that almost takes away her breath and her senses.

A few moments she rests in the quiet garden, then crossing the lawn she gently opens the gate, and flies away swiftly through the streets of Paris, hardly conscious of anything save that she is free.

CHAPTER I.

It is autumn at Marindin. The woods around the old house are splendid with the gold of fast-fading bracken, the coral red of hips and haws.

The grand old trees are painted with gorgeous tints. The leaves of the sycamore are splashed with black, the hazel is yellow, the sumac has donned a scarlet robe, the beeches are bright, chestnut colour, the deep-hued creeper clings and climbs over the outhouses, and the Royal and its surroundings seem to be looking their best as though in honour of the coming of their master, Earl Marindin, who, after nearly ten years wandering "neath Eastern skies, has at last decided to return once more to the ancient home of his forefathers.

Marindin Royal is a grand old castle of the Tudor period, built of dark grey stone, its battlemented walls softened by the ivy and lichen which have crept over its bare, stony face, its castellated turrets, and time-worn donjon, almost concealing with their thick growth the narrow loopholes and the escutcheon on the barbican, with

the family arms, a lion salient, holding a drawn sword, with the legend underneath, *Honour Before All*, in great gold letters.

There is a noble entrance, and a huge, square hall, oak-pannelled, and hung with flags and trophies dating from the Middle Ages, out of which open many doors, leading down endless corridors to suite after suite of rooms, with mullioned casements and deep-set windows, broken here and there by an oriel projecting out, supported by a corbel or bracket.

It is a vast place, and there is a certain amount of mediæval dulness within its stone walls that no modern taste or innovation can entirely do away with in the larger rooms and the dim, low-ceiled passages; but in the west-wing are some smaller apartments, which have been used daily for the last hundred years by the Marindins when staying at the castle, and they lack nothing of charm and cosiness.

In one of these cosy rooms two ladies are sitting this bright September day, looking out at the garden arranged somewhat in the Dutch style, with a quaint loveliness which makes it easy to picture its broad alleys and rose-bordered walks peopled by beauties in aëque and hoops, with patches and beplumbed faces, squired by gentlemen in ruffies, full-skirted coats and powdered hair.

It is a delightful little cabinet, with its cedar-wood ceiling, and gold-decked panels painted with flowers and figures, in the Watteau style, its hangings of satin, its soft luxurious rugs and the dainty nick-nacks strewn about in a careless, graceful fashion.

One of its occupants, however, seems to find little pleasure in contemplating her surroundings.

Reclining on a sofa, staring moodily at the home park and the stretch of woods beyond, lies the Lady Silver Desmond.

She is vexed and sullen, and it shows in every curve and line of her haughty, high-bred face.

"Shall we have some tea, mother?" she asks at last, turning her cold blue eyes on the dignified, white-haired lady sitting near, employed on some delicate piece of fancy work.

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"Well, I don't particularly 'wish it,' only it will pass some of these dreary minutes that go so slowly. Each one seems like an hour."

"I don't know why they should seem to go so slowly to you, Silver," replies the Duchess of Palliser, rather sharply. "We have only been here three weeks; and surely you have everything you can possibly want, and more than you are accustomed to in your own home?"

"Three weeks!" retorts her daughter, yawning; "it seems like three months, or three years."

"Nonsense! It is simply because you have not a string of men at your beck and call that you consider it dull."

"Tea," she adds shortly, to the magnificent creature with powdered head and pink legs, who answers the sharp 'ping' of the jewelled bell she had touched.

"That may be so. I should certainly like a few to enliven me and this old dungeon."

"O' d' dungeon, Silver! How can you speak in such terms of one of the finest historic places in England!"

"Historic rubbish!" mutters the young lady.

"The dearest wish of my heart is to see you mistress of it," continues the Duchess. "You and your cousin were much together as children; perhaps his fondness for his old playmate will revive. He may ask you to be his wife."

"You forget, mother, that I am five years his senior, and a man of thirty is not very likely to care for a woman older than himself, and one, moreover, whom he knows well has been offered in every matrimonial market in Europe, and failed to find a purchaser."

"And whose fault is that! When you were first presented you had offers enough, good ones, too, only your pride and vanity was a stumbling block in the way. You can't expect after being for nearly twenty years before the fashionable world as a marriageable woman that men will run after you and make as much of you as they did when you first appeared."

"No, I don't expect it," replies Lady Silver, bitterly, as she rises and goes over to the tea-table. "I've lost my chance, and suppose I shall never have another offer now."

"I don't see why you shouldn't. You have worn well, wonderfully well, for a fair woman; and if you would only lay aside that insufferable pride you may yet make a brilliant, successful match."

"Perhaps; I doubt it, though I agree with you that I have worn well," and she raises her eyes and studies her reflection in a Venetian mirror hanging opposite.

It is a handsome face, aristocratic and refined to the last degree, but cold and expressionless, wanting in colour, too. The hair is light and silky, the eyes blue and well placed, the complexion fair almost to a fault, the head poised gracefully on the slim throat, the figure fine and fully developed. She is beautifully dressed in pale azure, with pink coral ornaments, and is a striking specimen of womanhood, yet she lacks softness, and repels more than she attracts.

"There is the Duke of Paulton," continues her mother; "he is still all devotion."

"Yes; a hairless sexagenarian, old enough to be my grandfather."

"Still, very young and handsome to most women when stood on his money-bags at Paulton Chase."

"To most women, perhaps; not to me. I should only take him as a last resource."

"You are too hard to please, and will die an old maid."

"Perhaps so," and setting down her Crown Derby teacup Lady Silver goes back to her sofa, and pulls the silken ears of her spaniel.

Outwardly she is calm; her breeding is too good to allow any of the gall-like bitterness of her soul to appear. A vain, proud woman, who has missed her opportunity, whose heart and soul are bound up in self; who loves rich dresses, costly jewels, and all the good things money alone can procure; and who is obliged to think and plan and contrive to make the grand appearances that is demanded of her as a Duke's daughter, because her only brother, the Marquis of Vereton has lived too fast; kept hunters and racers and yachts, an hotel in Paris, a shooting-box in the Highlands, a fishing-lodge in Norway, and leased a theatre, like any enterprising showman instead of a descendant of the brave Palliser, who came over with Norman William, and for his gallantry in the Conqueror's service, was raised to a peerage and given a great tract of land in fair Devonshire, and which said enterprise has nearly ruined the Duke, his father, who has quite an old-fashioned sense of honour, and actually thinks a man ought to pay his debts, just or otherwise.

Lady Silver feels little love for the brother whose reckless extravagance has plunged them so deeply in debt, from which the most rigid economy will hardly ever free them; and who has robbed their ancient name of its untarnished lustre, their mode of life of its former glory.

She loves wealth, magnificence, all the pomp and ceremony those born in the purple are accustomed to, and hates the economy they are obliged to practise, which reduces her to wearing turned dresses, cleaned gloves, and last year's mantles.

It is only the tact and skill of her French maid, who is a perfect treasure, that keeps her from falling back into the ranks of ill-dressed dowdy women.

"What a fool I have been," she murmurs to herself, her eyes wandering round the exquisite little room. "To think that I might have been mistress of such a place as this, and just from pride lost the chance. Laurence Vere loved me, and I should have been better off as a rich Baronet's wife, than as a poor Duke's daughter. For the future I will be wiser, and trample on my pride."

"Do you see anything of Noel?" asks the Duchess, after a pause.

"No, mother, nothing. I begin to think that after all he does not intend to come to-day. We shall have to wait here another three weeks in dreary solitude to welcome him home after his long absence."

"Hardly so long as that. He must come

within the next two or three days, as he has asked several friends here for the shooting."

"Well, I hope he will, and the friends as well. This place is a perfect Sleepy Hollow."

"I hope you won't make any remarks of this sort before Noel."

"Of course not."

"I should like to see you mistress of it."

"I have not the slightest chance, mother."

"I don't know that. He used to be very fond of you, and if—"

"Here he comes," breaks in Lady Silver, as a phaeton, drawn by a pair of high-stepping greys, dashes by the window, and draws up at the entrance.

"Remember, now, pray remember," cried the Duchess, warningly, "no display of pride or temper."

"Hush! mother, hush!" she whispers, apprehensively, as the door swings open, and Noel Tenterville, Earl Marindin, enters.

"Aunt, this is really most kind," he says, bending his tall head to kiss her cheek. "Your presence here makes it really a home-coming for me."

"My dear boy," she answers, affectionately, "I am only too glad to be among the first to welcome you back to your home and England."

"Thanks, thanks! And Silver? Have you no welcome for your old playmate?"

"A very warm one," answers his cousin, coming forward with a graceful gesture, and resting her white hand for a moment on his shoulders, while he salutes her.

"I am over-joyed to see you."

Which is quite true, for though she feels she will have little chance of becoming his wife, yet she knows that he is generosity itself, and that many a handsome dress and costly set of jewels will be presented to her by her rich relative, if she is only commonly civil.

"And I see you, dear."

"A good beginning," thinks the Duchess to herself.

"Of course you will take some tea, Noel?" she adds aloud.

"Yes, thanks. After spending the last year in America, I have, of course, become an inveterate tea-drinker," he replies, as he takes the dainty little cup from her hands.

"You are looking very well, Silver," he goes on. "Time seems to stand still with you."

"Do you think so?" she queries with a little laugh; "I wish it did."

"You will make sad havoc among my gentlemen friends who are coming to slaughter the partridges."

"By the way, aunt, Clissold and Sir Duncan Penrith come to-morrow. Will it be any inconvenience, or is everything ready?"

"It will be no inconvenience," answers the Duchess, graciously.

"Your housekeeper, under my direction, a month ago filled up all the vacancies in your household, and for the last three weeks, as you know, we have been expecting you from day to day. Everything is ready for the reception of your friends."

"I don't know how to thank you for all the trouble you have taken."

"It was no trouble. I am always pleased to do anything I can for you."

Which is the fact, for the simple reason that when engaged in superintending the management of his affairs, she can live rent free at Marindin Royal or in his spacious house in Eaton-square, which suits her exactly, because Vereton Chase and Palliser Mansion are both let to rich commoners, who pay liberal rents for them.

"It is very good of you. I hope you have not felt dull here, all alone?"

"Not at all. But of course we are very glad to see you and have your society. We quite thought you were coming back last year. What made you stay so long in America?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly," he replies lightly.

"I liked the place. It seemed so open, so clean and wholesome after the eastern cities I had spent so much time in."

He did not tell his aunt that it was a beautiful face with a pair of soft pleading brown eyes, seen but once, that had kept him in the States for

nearly a year—a year which had been spent in searching for the owner of the said face, trying to find out who she was, where she had come from and, what was more important, where she had gone to.

He had heard her sing at a third-rate afternoon concert in Chicago, and was struck with the depth and roundness of her voice, and the uncommon loveliness of her fair face, shaded by a great black-plumed velvet hat.

He had made inquiries, but failed to find out anything about her. On the programme she was put down as Miss Marian Ormond.

Frantically he searched, day after day, for some trace of the woman whose beauty had impressed him so strongly.

He travelled the length and breadth of the United States, hoping to see her once again; but at last, after the lapse of a year spent in aimless wanderings, he gave it up in despair and returned to England, feeling that no other woman would ever interest him again, or be to him as dear as was the mere memory of a lovely face, seen only once, and never to be forgotten.

The Duchess is satisfied with his explanation. Lady Silver, watching him closely, sees the sudden cloud that rests on his face, the faraway look in his eyes, and thinks to herself "there is a woman in the case."

CHAPTER II.

THE autumn passes rapidly at Marindin Royal and Christmas is at hand. The park is covered with a thick pall; the snow lies in great drifts in the hollows, the lake is frozen hard, and the turrets of the old castle are tipped with powdery white, like down.

There are gay doings in Noel Tenterville's halls. The Duke and Duchess of Palliser and Lady Silver Desmond have remained with him, and fancy dress balls, skating by torchlight, amateur theatricals, concerts and riding parties are the order of the day, to say nothing of the feast given to his tenantry in the great oak-pannelled trophy-decked hall, which the eld-hopper lads and ladies seem to enjoy immensely.

All the gaiety, all the fun and merriment is lost on Lord Noel. His mind's full of but one memory; and constantly when with his grand friends at ball or concert or rout, the whole scene would seem to fade from before him, and he would hear again a sweet voice singing—

"Will you come back to me, Douglas! Douglas!
In the old likeness that I know?
I would be so faithful, so loving, Douglas,
Douglas, Douglas, tender and true!"

see again a fair face, with its wistful brown eyes, and scarlet mobile lips.

He is glad when New Year's Day is over and most of his guests depart, including his aunt, uncle, and cousin, who have borrowed his Eaton-square house for a few weeks. Their departure leaves him free to go up to the North to his friend Captain Clissold's shooting-box. It suits his frame of mind, the wild scenery, the solitude of moor and tarn. He walks for miles till he comes to the sea, or gallops his horse along the smooth strand, watching the toes of the surf on the shore, and the sand-pipers, ring-plover, and gay-plumaged mallow sweep by.

"You find it dull here, Marindin, I am afraid," says his host one night, when they have returned after a long day on the moorlands, the result of which is a "big bag," and even a hen-harrier, brought down by Clissold's unerring aim. "This is at best but a ramshackle juggle."

"I don't find it at all dull," responds his guest, quickly. "I had rather too much gaiety this winter at Marindin."

"Yes, I can imagine so. The Duchess and Lady Silver must be slightly overpowering. Take care you are not caught."

"No fear of that."

"Confound it, what luck!" ejaculates the Captain next morning, when his man brings in the letters. "This is from uncle Sir Duncan. Wants me to go to Penrith, I suppose. Yes," he continues as he scans the note. "A nice

journey this weather from the north to the south."

"Yes, I don't envy you."

"My going needn't interfere with you, Marindin. You can stay here if you wish."

"Thanks," replies the Earl. "If I may I will."

"Of course you may. Old Nan will see to your comfort." And so Marindin remains at the quaint little north country shooting-box while his friend travels from one end of England to the other.

At first it was all very well, but after a time he begins to find that evenings spent alone are rather dull, and looks about for some amusement.

"How far is it by road to Colthorpe from here?" he asks MacNab, old toothless Nan's better half.

"Five miles, sir."

"Is there anything going on there?"

"Yes, sir, I see'd a concert were to take place at the Town Hall to-night."

"To-night? I think I shall go. I suppose you can drive me over?"

"Yes, sir, I'll go and harness Jupiter; it'll be slow going over them slippery roads."

A couple of hours later Lord Marindin is seated in the front row in the Town Hall of Colthorpe. He is rather early, and amuses himself watching the provincials and their peculiar finery. After a time he glances at the programme and the first thing he sees is—"The Kerry Dance"—Miss Marian Ormond.

For a moment the blood rushes to his head, the letters dance before his eyes, the lights whirl around, all is misty. Then across the throbbing of his pulses, the chaotic confusion of his brain, fall the notes of a sweet well-remembered voice,—

"Oh! the days of the kerry dancing,
Oh! the ring of the piper's tune;
Oh! for one of those hours of gladness,
Gone, alas! like our youth, too soon."

And, lifting his eyes, he sees once more the woman whose face had lived in his memory for two years.

Eagerly his eyes drink in her loveliness. He never removes them from her face until the song is finished, and bowing her thanks for the rounds of applause that follow she glides gracefully from the platform. Then she starts up abruptly and goes to seek the manager, a man he has known in Paris and Vienna.

His card sent in by an official quickly brings out Mr. Lewis, who is all smiles and bows to the Earl.

"Lewis," he begins, abruptly, "I want an introduction to Miss Ormond. Is it feasible? Can you manage it?"

"Well, my lord," he replies, hesitatingly, "I don't know. Miss Ormond is somewhat different from the general run of public singers. She is very exclusive, and shows a decided objection to having any gentlemen introduced to her. I don't know if she—"

"Can't you try? Ask if you may introduce me."

"That would never answer! She would say 'No' at once. It can only be done in this manner: Come with me to the artists' room. I will present you first to some of the others, and afterwards, in a casual, unpremeditated sort of way, to her. Then she will have no idea that you want to know her in particular."

"Yes, that will do very well." And his lordship followed the manager into the rather dreary room, where the members of his company are waiting to appear in turn before an approving or disapproving—as the case may be—audience. He is introduced to the contralto, a stout lady of an uncertain age, much beplastered and powdered, who speaks with a guttural German accent; to the soprano, who is tall and woefully thin, attired in a pink, silk gown, which is out in such a fashion that it liberally displays a pair of scraggy shoulders and a pigeon-breasted neck to the public gaze; to the tenor, Signor Tomasso, and after a time—which appears an age to him—to Marian Ormond. He talks commonplace at first, looking at her furtively, not to give her

the impression that she is the sole object of his visit to the green-room; but he finds it hard not to study her. She appears more lovely in the eyes of the infatuated young man, with her magnificent fair hair uncovered, her soft brown eyes, wistful as those of a hunted stag, unshaded by hat or sunshade, dazzling through their long black lashes; her rounded thin shape shown to perfection in its clinging robe of palest blue; a great bunch of purplish-black poodles, fastened with graceful negligence, under her dimpled chin, bringing out the clear tints of the exquisite complexion.

It is such an uncommon, sweet face, he thinks; so winning, so fascinating, with its ever-varying expression of mingled mockery and melancholy that gives such a provoking charm, such a piquant look, to the clear-cut features. It is a face to ensnare, bewilder, interest—and it interests Lord Marindin.

"I think I have seen you before to-night?" he ventures at last.

"Indeed! Where?" she asks, with rather a startled look in her eyes.

"At Chicago. Singing at Valmency's concerts."

"Oh, yes. I was there two years ago."

"Did you stay in the States long after that particular concert?"

"No; we returned to England ten days later."

It is the Earl's turn to say, "Indeed!" now, and he says it, and thinks of the year he wasted searching for her in America.

"I see you sing at two more concerts here?"

"Yes. On Saturday and Wednesday."

"I shall hope to have the pleasure of hearing you again."

"You are very kind," she answers.

And then she goes on to the platform again, and he returns to his seat and listens. The song is "Golden Love," and the words seem to him prophetic of their future as they ring out, clear and sweet, through the hall:—

"Never to part, oh, darling! never more!"

The next morning he gallops over to Colthorpe, and, putting up his horse at "The Mermaid," wanders about the town the whole day through, hoping to meet the fair songstress, but he is disappointed, and returns to his friend's little box tired and dispirited.

Saturday morning also, though spent by Noel wandering about the narrow, crooked streets of the quaint old town, brings him no reward; but in the evening he is one of the earliest to enter the concert-room.

After Miss Ormond's first song he repairs to the green-room, chatting cordially with those of the company he knows are approaching her, and when he does he takes courage, from the kind smile that welcomes him, to offer a magnificent red camellia he has in his coat, which is accepted and fastened in the corsage of the sweeping black dress she wears.

He does not leave the room when she sings again, but waits and assists her down the steps when she returns.

"That is your last song to-night?"

"Yes."

"I shall not hear you again until Wednesday!"

"No, I suppose not."

"Not unless your lordship will honour us to-morrow," says Lewis, who is standing near; and, being a shrewd man of the world, guesses how the land lies, and wishes to conciliate a rich nobleman, whose patronage and support will be an advantage to him. "We are staying at the Queen's Hotel. If you will join our party at dinner to-morrow, three sharp, your lordship knows how flattered and obliged we shall feel."

"Thanks, thanks, Lewis. I shall be most happy," replies Noel at once. "And the obligation, I assure you, will be on my side. It is dull enough at North Port to make me crave for society."

And so fate, in the shape of Lewis, theatrical and professional agent, manager of provincial and continental touring companies, throws Noel Earl Marindin, Viscount Grantley, Baron Teuterville, last scion of an old and noble family, into

close companionship with the woman whose beauty has exercised such a strange fascination over him; of whom he knows nothing, save that she has a lovely face, a sweet voice, and that she sings in public—a mark for the gaze of anyone who cares to pay for the privilege of looking at her.

"It was very good of you to accept the bouquet last night."

"It was most kind of you to remember my having said I loved flowers, and send it me."

They stand together, Earl and singer, by the surging sea, watching the toes of the surf on the yellow strand, and the winged dwellers of the shores as they fly swiftly above the wild flowers and silent moorpoles.

"It was no kindness, simply a pleasure to myself. I should have sent you some before had I thought you would accept them."

Marian Ormond murmurs something, her companion cannot catch what.

"Do you go to Windermere to-morrow? Lewis tells me he intends to leave here."

"No, I do not go with them."

"No. You stay here, then?" he says, eagerly. "I shall see you still. I feared these happy days were over for me."

"I do not remain here," she answers a little coldly. "I feel I want a rest. I have told Mr. Lewis that I shall not accept any more engagements until May or June."

"You have been working too hard, exerting yourself too much. You ought to go to Italy for a year and idle in its orange groves. You don't look strong," and he casts an anxious glance at the beautiful face, which is somewhat pale.

"My looks are not truthful, then," she answers, lightly, "for I am very strong, never ill. Only I think my voice will benefit by a holiday."

"Of course, and where will you spend it?"

"Really, Lord Marindin," she says, with an embarrassed laugh, "you seem to be quite interested in my movements."

"Yes, I am," he assents, with a significance that brings a bright flush to her cheek. "Will you tell me?"

"I would rather not if you will excuse me."

"Why not? Have these last few pleasant days been so little to you, or so disagreeable, that you will not give me the chance of repeating them?"

"Not at all. But—but—" she stammers.

"But what?" he demands.

"I think—we ought not to meet again—that it would be better for you not to see me any more."

"I consider that I am best judge of that."

"Perhaps. Still, I have a right to some voice in the matter."

"Certainly," he answers, stiffly. "Of course, if you don't wish it and would rather not—"

"You know it is not that," she answers, lifting her great wistful eyes to his. "It is the difference in our positions, and—"

"That is nothing to me," he breaks in, impetuously. "Miss Ormond—Marian—tell me where you are going! Let me have the happiness of seeing you again. You have my sincerest respect, my deepest admiration. Do not let any false notions of pride separate us, and debar me from the pleasure of your society."

"If what you say be true," she replies, in a low tone, "it ought to make me more firm in refusing to see you."

"It is true that I admire and respect you, but I fail to see why that should drive me away from you. Tell me," he pleads. "Let me see you again."

She looks up at him, a tender light on her face. It is so hard, so terribly hard, to refuse his request, to shut herself out from what would be the greatest joy her life has ever known, to put from her a certain happiness. He looks so handsome and noble standing beside her, a world of pleading in his violet eyes. The sun falls in glittering rays on his golden head; he is as fair, as brave as any Viking that went with gallant King Olaf—

"Sailing, sailing,
Northward into Drontheim fiord."

A throb of exultation stirs her heart, as she feels his love is, or will be, hers, if she yields to his prayer.

"Tell me," he pleads again.

And something stronger than her sense of honour and right compels her to speak.

"I am going to stay at Moulsey with Mr. Lewis's mother."

"And I may come to see you there!"

"If you really wish it."

"I do wish it, more than I wish for anything else on earth."

There is an amount of fervour in the Earl's tone that carries conviction with it, and the beautiful woman beside him who is growing strangely tender towards him, makes one last effort to save him from herself.

"You must not come for a month or six weeks."

"A month!" he repeats, in a dismayed tone. "Yes; by that time you may have changed your mind, and, perhaps, will not care to call on me. You must promise this," she adds, playfully.

"I promise, of course," he answers, gravely. He had searched for her for two years; he can wait a few weeks, if at the end of that time he is certain to see her once more. "But a month, a year," he goes on, "an eternity can make no difference to me now;" and pressing her hands tenderly, as they reach the hotel, he turns and leaves her with a last lingering look at the lovely face.

CHAPTER III.

UNDER the shade of a purple foliage beech sat Marian Ormond.

The river ripples along almost at her feet, glinting and sparkling in the sunshine; the birds sing, the drooping trees throw fantastic shadows on the water, the silver-stemmed osiers and graceful rushes wave in the gentle breeze. Countless violets shed their fragrance on the air and mingle with the starlike primrose; a lark is singing blithely, now soaring up, far into the blue vaults of Heaven, now dropping down to earth.

But the song of the bird falls dully on her ear; she does not heed it or the fair spring flowers, or the sunlight coming in ripples of gold over the stream; she is thinking dreamily, a faraway look on her face.

It is two months since she parted with Noel Tenterville, and she has neither seen nor heard from him.

"He has forgotten," she murmurs. "It is better so." Yet the pained look deepens in her great eyes, the graceful head droops lower; and Noel, who unseen, has crossed the lawn and stands behind her, notes it and her dejected attitude.

"Does she long for me to come to her?" he wonders, and at the sight of her warm, graceful loveliness, which has haunted him from the first moment he saw her, the old, scarce-reisted passion, which has swayed him for over two years, leaps into fresh strength, wakes into new life, and hurries him on—on over the brink. He does not stay to weigh the cost of his actions, to think of the future, of the penalty, of his great name and ancient lineage; he only knows that he loves, only thinks of the woman before him.

"Marian!"

He touches her hand gently as he speaks. She lifts her eyes, and rises tremulously as she meets his.

"You have come—at last!" The words break from her lips almost unconsciously; there is a flush on the delicate cheek, a new light in the great brown eyes that adds to their beauty.

The suddenness of his approach has startled and thrown her off her guard. She has meant for his sake to greet him coldly, with the studied politeness society demands from more acquaintances, and then, then to send him from her, bidding him never return again, and, instead, she is standing before him with outstretched hands and parted lips, the colour coming and going in her fair face.

The Earl, as he gazes at her under the shade

of the purple beeches, and sees the tremulous, unstudied joy with which she greets him, knows, feels with a mighty throb of exultation, that she loves him.

"Yes, I have come. Did you think I could forget you?"

"I did not know, I could not tell."

"You know now. I struggled to keep away, as you seemed to wish it, but the struggle has been vain. I have come to stay, if you will let me; I can never part from you again."

He bends down closer to the face, whose irresistible loveliness charms him into forgetfulness of all he ought to remember. The down-drooped lids, the soft flush, the shy tremor, all add to its beauty.

"My love! my dearest!" he murmurs. "Mine alone and always."

The great passion he bears her sways him like a reed. He does not count the cost of his actions—does not think of the life-long tie his words entail, as he draws her tenderly into his arms, giving, with the kiss he presses on her lips, his future to the keeping of a woman of whom he knows nothing, bartering the honour of his ancient name, his freedom, his peace, to possess what he loves best on earth.

His heart has gone out to her with a passionate longing, and he is determined to gratify that longing, forgetting the motto of his race, *Honours Before All*.

"Take my soul to inherit,
To suffer punishment and pain,
So this woman but be mine."

That is all he wants, all he cares for in this moment of supreme rapture.

"Tell me that you love me," he whispers, "that you will be my wife?" And she, lifting her glorious orbs, and looking back love into his, says "Yes," and seals his fate and her own.

One bright May morning, a few weeks later, there is a quaint wedding at the quaint little church of East Moulsey, and surely no Earl of Marindin Royal has ever had such a bridal before.

There is no gathering of the great and the grand in the old time-worn structure.

Besides the bride and her groom there are only six people present, and three of these are the clergymen, the church bandle, and the antiquated specimen of feminine humanity who cleans the place; the other trio are Mr. Lewis, his mother, and Captain Clissold, who has come to play the part of best man, and who wonders vaguely where he has seen his friend's bride before. That he has seen that pale, beautiful face he feels sure, but where?

That is the question he cannot answer.

There is not a shred of bridal gear about Marian. Her dress is of dark grey silk, and her heavily-plumed hat matches it in colour.

Lord Marindin has hurried on the wedding, fearful that something may occur to stop it, that some of his relatives may hear of it, and try to rob him of his heart's desire.

He does not intend to announce that such a person as Marian Ormond exists until she is his wife, and till no one can come between them or part them save death.

They kneel before Heaven's altar and plight their vows, the parson gabbles out the marriage service, and these twain are made one flesh.

When the ceremony is over they drive away in Clissold's phaeton, leaving the owner thereof standing in the road by the church porch, bare-headed, and still wondering where he has seen the newly-made Countess of Marindin.

After a month spent in Hampshire the Earl takes his bride to the home of his forefathers.

"It was the time of roses;
We plucked them as we passed."

And Marian thinks there never were more lovely ones than those that border the walks before the Royal.

It is all so magnificent, so grand—the Home-park, with its graceful deer, its noble views, its picturesque lake; the gardens, brilliant with choice flowers; the vast old Castle—that she feels almost overpowered as she realises, for the first

time, something of the wealth, power, and position of the man who, bloodily trusting her, asking to know nothing of what has gone before in her life, has made her his wife and a peeress, raised her to the rank of the highest in the land.

A flush rises to her cheek as she alights from the carriage and passes, on her husband's arm, through the lines of servants drawn up in the great hall, where battered morions and dented breastplates, notched rapier and jewelled dagger, hang on the walls above the grim figures clothed in armour, from the time of the first Tudor, armour which has been worn by the ancestors of her husband.

"This is to be your morning-room, my dearest," he says, as he conducts her to the Watteau cabinet, "I hope you will like it and find it cheerful."

"It is exquisite, Noel!" she replies, delightedly. "I shall pass most of my time here," and she looks round at the lovely paintings and dainty hangings with admiring eyes.

"In that case I shall spend several hours here also, every day," he says, with a fond smile, that shows he is still a lover.

"Take me to the portrait-gallery," she says, later on in the evening, after dinner, "I want to see all your people that have gone before."

"Come, then," he answers, smiling, "the light is still good," and together they go up the broad, deep oak stairs to the gallery above, which runs the whole length of the west wing. It is one of the noblest rooms in the castle; with its lofty frescoed ceiling, its dark panels, its many peaked oriel windows, its smooth, polished floor, and rare family portraits.

The evening sun is screaming in, lighting up the pictures, and making a sort of halo round Noel's head with its red rays.

The Earl paces slowly down the long room, pointing out each celebrity; and Marian, as she looks at him, thinks how strongly he resembles the pictured faces of his dead and bygone ancestors.

The yellow hair, violet eyes, and, above all, the genial, sunny expression seems to be inherited by each and everyone of them.

It is there in the portrait of Richard, fourth Earl of Marindin, who fought with Edward the Black Prince at Cressy and Poitiers; now it is on the lips of Guy, depicted in trunk hose and huge ruff, a favourite of good Queen Bess; now brightening the handsome face of another Noel, a gay cavalier of Charles the Second's time; now softening and redeeming the somewhat stern visage of a staunch follower of James II.; again under the powdered hair of William and Mary's era; in the beautiful faces of the women of the race, whether dressed in flowing Tudor robes, stiff stomacher of Scotch James's time, or the rich brocades favoured by Anne.

"Who is this beautiful Spanish-looking woman in the Elizabethan ruff?" queries the new Countess, stopping before a full-length portrait.

"That is Mercedes. She was the wife of a gallant of Queen Mary's Court, and was high in favour both with the Queen and her husband, Philip; and, strange to say, with her sister also, when she succeeded to the throne. You see," he goes on, "that nearly all the Marindins marry dark women, and yet the sons born to them are invariably fair."

"How strange!" says Marian.

"Who is that?" she asks, suddenly, pointing at a miniature of a very beautiful and extremely fair woman, with powdered hair and patched face. "A daughter of the house, I suppose, as you all marry dark women."

"No," replies the Earl, "she was the wife of another Noel, who was one of the brightest wits of Queen Anne's Court, and a very bad woman. She was a disgrace to us, the only blot on our stainless scutcheon. Her portrait hung in that space opposite my mother's, the last Countess, but I had it removed. I did not wish the portrait of such a she to hang amid the stainless virtuous woman of my race."

"I shall take down this miniature," he goes on, unhooking it from the wall, "and your portrait, my love, shall take the place left vacant by the removal of wicked Madam Dorothy's."

"Find me another spot, Noel; don't put me there!"

"His wife's voice sounds strange and far away. He turns and looks at her; she is very pale, and her eyes have a strained, wild pain in them."

"What is the matter, Marian?" he cries. "Nothing," she answers, pressing her hand to her side. "Nothing; only, perhaps, I think I am a little tired."

"My dearest, how selfish of me not to think of your fatigue. You must be quite worn out after your journey; I must insist on your going to your room at once," and he leads her out into the great corridor, across to the suite of apartments, he has had prepared for her, hung with the palest blue satin and silver, which suits her blonde fairness so well.

The windows look out on the chase, and a sweep of wild woodland, beyond which is the sea.

"What a beautiful view! I shall never get tired of looking at it."

"I hope not, my love; as the best part of your life will be spent here it would be rather awkward if you did; though, of course, I can purchase a place elsewhere, if you prefer to live in a more modern establishment."

"No, no, my husband," she answers, with somewhat uncanny fervour, clinging to him fondly.

"I never want to leave your home—my home now. I should like to live here always—always, and never leave it. Alone with you, only you."

"That would be very pleasant," he answers, lightly, "but quite impossible. We both have duties and obligations to society, which we must fulfil. Besides, I want the world to see my wife, to admire my choice," he goes on, with fond pride.

"However much I may wish to keep you all to myself, I feel that I cannot do so. I must take you into society, introduce you to my friends and relatives, and entertain here. My old place has too long been given over to solitude and silence; I look to you to revive its former glories and gay hospitalities; to give better dinners and more enjoyable dances than anyone else in the county, even her Grace of Elmhist, who is celebrated for her tact and charm as a hostess."

"Noel, must we go into society, live here—entertain?" falters his wife.

"My dearest, what a question to ask," he answers, turning his eyes, full of surprised wonder, on her; "of course we must."

"Your friends, your relatives, I almost dread meeting them. They will look down on the woman you have chosen to raise to your high estate, and all my deathless love for you will be as nothing in their eyes."

"Do not distress yourself about that, Marian; it is enough that I have chosen you. No one will dare to look down upon my wife."

The pride of a blue blooded old race shows in his haughty tone, and the lifting of his handsome head, as though he would say, "who shall dare to criticise my actions, the actions of Noel Tenterville, Earl of Marindin. You are sweet, and pure and true, as any titled dame who has married into my family. I have trusted you with my name and my honour, and I know its lustre will never be tarnished, eh, love?"

The woman leaning on his breast shivers a little, but murmurs "no," and clings closer to him.

"Now," he continues, "I must leave you. You are tired out and want a long sleep. I shall go and write to my aunt, the Duchess of Palliser, to come here as soon as possible, with her daughter, Lady Silver Ormond, and stay with us, and to a few other friends, who will come and make this old castle more cheerful for you. And, Marian, you will try and love my aunt for my sake, will you not? She is a charming woman; I am sure you will like each other."

"Yes, dear Noel, I will, for your sake first, and hers afterwards, if she will let me."

"That is right; au revoir," and kissing her white brow he leaves the room, and goes to write the letter which is to announce to the duchess the fact that her nephew, with his vast rent-roll, and many titles, has married a woman who is—nobody knows who or what exactly.

CHAPTER IV.

"Good heavens! How disgraceful!" exclaimed her Grace of Palliser.

"What is disgraceful, mother?" asks Lady Silver, languidly, looking across the breakfast table at Eaton-square.

"Your cousin, Tenterville," replies the elder lady, flourishing the letter she is reading in the air.

"What of him?"

"What of him? Why he is married."

"Married!" Lady Silver's lips trembled somewhat, and her pale face grew a shade paler.

"Yes! Has been married a whole month."

"To whom?"

"A lady not quite in our rank of life," replies the Duchess, referring to the letter and speaking with a sneer. "A Miss Ormond. Never heard of her, did you?"

"No, she can't be in our set."

"Of course not. It is a mis-alliance evidently, because he wants us to go down to Marindin as soon as possible, and be introduced to her, and 'do all we can for his wife.' She is some nameless horror," goes on her Grace distractedly, "as somebody once said in a book, 'a chateaux danseuse, or something worse.' It is scandalous, shameful, and I thought you would be mistress there."

"I told you I had not the smallest chance."

"You might have had but for this designing woman, who has entrapped him. However, I won't go down to the Royal; I won't give her the support of my presence, and the benefit of my power in the fashionable world."

"Yes you will, mother," says Lady Silver, who has been perusing her cousin's letter very quietly. "You mustn't forget that this house in which we live is his, the horses we drive, the carriages we use his also, and that for his assistance and help we should have to disappear bodily from the 'fashionable world.' You take in plain sewing, and I go out as a governess, or a clerk, or something horrible."

"I don't forget it," with a groan.

"Then, of course you must see the folly of offending him. We must go down to Marindin, and appear to receive her with open arms and be friendly. We can watch her closely, and if we find a weak place in her armour, to speak figuratively, slay her without mercy, if she behaves badly—and those sort of half-bred people are always wild—he may divorce her."

"Yes, perhaps so," agrees her Grace, brightening perceptibly, "and then there will be another chance for you."

"He wants us to be there by the middle of July," goes on Silver, disregarding the latter part of her mother's speech. "That will do very well. Another fortnight and everything will be over in town. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I think so. And now we had better go and consult Marie about our dresses. We must impress this creature Noel has brought into the family with our magnificence."

And the two ladies go to consult the French maid, who is such a treasure in the way of converting old gowns into new ones.

The ordeal is over. Marian has been presented to the Duchess of Palliser, has been embraced by her, and has also received a stony salute from Lady Silver, who has eyed her all over, but fails to find the smallest flaw in her perfect beauty, or her easy, graceful manners.

It is the evening after their arrival. They sit at dinner in the banquetting hall, all hung with purple velvet, on which, embroidered with gold threads, are the lions salient of the house of Tenterville, with here and there a rare picture, a Van Vol, a Groux, a couple of Vanderwaldes, and a Rembrandt. Hundreds of rose-coloured wax lights shed their radiance around, lighting up the massive oak side-board, with its garniture of gold plate and delicate Venetian glass, gleaming on gay dresses and lovely faces, but not on one lovelier than the face of the hostess, who sits at the top of the long table with an ease and *Auclair* as though to the manner born.

She is rather pale, and the huge blood-red rubies, old family jewels, which she wears round

her throat and arms and in her hair, add to the pallor; but, beyond that, there is not the slightest outward sign of the extreme nervousness which possesses her, and the Earl is pleased and proud of the beautiful woman he has made his own.

"Your wife is quite a beauty," says her Grace of Elmhist when dinner is over, and they are in the great drawing-room, all gold and white satin. "She will make quite a sensation next season. It is such an uncommon style. You must bring her over to the Hirst soon."

"Thanks," replies Lord Marindin, greatly gratified by the openly expressed admiration of this celebrated leader of fashion and *ton*. "I shall be most pleased to do so."

"Who was your cousin's wife?" asks the great lady of Silver, later on, when Marian, yielding to her husband's wishes, consents reluctantly to sing.

"Well—really—I—don't exactly know," she replies in a hesitating way, which is meant, and which succeeds in arousing her Grace's curiosity and doubts. "She was a Miss Ormond. He told us that, but very little besides. You know what men are," she goes on, with a little significant shrug of her shoulders; "they see a pretty face, fall in love with it, and—marry it, no matter what is in the background."

"Ah! and so you think your cousin has been foolish enough to do that?"

"Well, really, I can't say. As I told your Grace, for the simple reason that I don't know."

"Ah!" ejaculates the Duchess of Elmhist again, gathering her lace round her, sitting up very straight in her chair, and beginning to wish devoutly that she had not invited Lord Marindin to bring his wife to the Hirst.

"You are not entirely English, are you?" asks Lady Silver, a few days later, as she and Marian sat together in the Watteau cabinet, occupied with some filmy lace work.

"My mother was English," replies the Countess, briefly.

"And your father?"

"He was half Norwegian," still more briefly.

"And I wonder what the other half was," muses Lady Silver, watching her cousin's wife through her half-closed lids. "You've got a secret, my lady, and I'll do my best to find it out, though you play your part very well, and don't let much appear on the surface."

"You sing remarkably well," she goes on, still watching intently the beautiful face of the *châtelaine* of Marindin.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes. You have a grand voice, and it has been well cultivated. You sing with all the ease and finish one generally meets with only in professional singers," concludes the Duke's daughter, daintily.

She speaks somewhat at random, but the arrow goes straight home. Marian's cheek flushes, and though she manages to murmur some words of thanks for the rather doubtful compliment she feels fearfully embarrassed, for it dwells upon her that the Earl has not told his relatives what she has been, and she feels instinctively that Lady Silver is her enemy, grudges and envies her the position to which she has been raised, and will watch her closely, to discover, if she can, all the events of her past life.

"Captain Ossold fancies he saw you in —"

"Marian," breaks in Lord Marindin's voice, as he enters the little cabinet; "I want you to go down to the village and play the Lady Bountiful to some of my poor people, and call at the Vicarage. Old Palmer is a bit of an anchorite, and shuts himself up with 'mummies,' aged eleven thousand years, ancient coins, antique furniture, and art treasures of all sorts, and neglects somewhat his daughter, a charming girl of about sixteen, whose acquaintance I should like you to cultivate, as I am sure you will find her a congenial companion. Can you go now my love?"

"Yes, certainly," says the Countess, rising with alacrity, glad of anything that will put an end to her cross-questioning.

"Will you accompany me, Lady Silver?"

She feels that politeness demands she shall ask the colley-eyed woman she is beginning to fear to go with her, and hopes she will refuse, but her hopes are doomed to disappointment.

"I shall be very pleased to call at the Vicarage with you," she replies, "and renew my acquaintance with the Vicar;" and so they set off together, and visit the model cottages in the village and give money to some, and promise flannel to the rheumatic old people and wine and strengthening broth to the ailing young ones; and then they go on to the vicarage—a quaint house almost overgrown, in front, by the close foliage of a Cotoneaster, surrounded by fine and elms and oaks, alder trees, which entertain a colony of noisy rooks, whose wrangling wake the echoes of the otherwise silent place.

A motherly person, whose rubicund, smiling visage is surrounded by a cap frill which has all the appearance of an Elizabethan ruff, answers the deep clang of the bell, and shows the ladies into a long room, with heavily-beamed ceiling, and old fashioned deeply-sunk window, and richly-carved, high-backed chairs.

"Master will be proud and honoured to see you, my lady," says the elderly handmaiden, bobbing and curtsying before Marian.

"And I hope your young mistress is at home, and that I shall see her as well," says the Countess, remembering her husband's instructions, and determined to try and please him to the utmost of her ability.

"Yes, my lady," and with another bob, and flourish of her huge cap-frills, the old woman disappears, and shortly the door opens and admits the Vicar, a placid, mild old man, with silvery white hair, a beard like the Patriarch's, and a sweet, low voice, and his daughter, a young, dark-eyed girl, with a pretty, innocent face, to whom Lady Marindin at once takes a great fancy and chats away gaily to, while Lady Silver talks to Mr. Palmer.

"You must come and stay with me at the Royal," says Marian, after a while, when they rise to leave, "if your father can spare you, and make a long stay."

"Thank you, Lady Marindin," he replies. "I shall be more than glad for my little girl to stay with you. This is but a dull place for youth to flourish in, and I fear my thoughts are so much in the past that I am poor company for Ada."

"Then I shall expect you to come the day after to-morrow."

"Thank you, my lady," answers the young girl, timidly. "I shall be very glad to come!"

And then they take their leave, declining the meal which is offered them in quaint little tumbler, of like antiquity with the rest of the establishment, and the biscuits, which looked as though they had come out of the ark, and go slowly back towards the Royal. In the Chase they meet a crowd of gamekeepers and men half-carrying something.

"What is it? Has anything happened?" asks Lady Silver, in her imperative way.

"Yes, my lady," says the gamekeeper, touching his cap. "There's bin some poacher arter the young birds, and we caught one o' the chaps, and in the tussle he's got a bit o' a knock on the head. We're takin' him down to the village to be plastered and unpunged, and then to the lock-up. The audacity o' the warmint," he concludes, angrily, "to dare prowl about in broad daylight," and in his just indignation, he shakes the more than half insensible wretch, who is firmly held on either side by two of his subordinates, and discloses his face with its intensely black moustaches, and thick dark hair, matted and clotted with blood.

As Lady Marindin's rest for the space of an instant on the pallid face, an exclamation of horror bursts from her lips, and clutching her companion's arm she drags her forward, exclaiming,—

"Oh merciful heavens, how horrible!"

"What is the matter?" asks the other coolly.

"Have not you courage enough to look at a little blood, and a man's battered head?"

"Yes! No—no!" murmurs Marian, incoherently.

"That face!"

"Well, what about it? Has been rather a handsome one, I should say—looks like a foreigner."

"Do you think so?" she asked, nervously.

"Yes; but what was there about it to frighten you?"

"Nothing. Only—only—" falters Marian, off her guard; "I fancied—he was like some one—I used to know—long ago."

"Oh, indeed," remarks Lady Silver, with so much emphasis that the Countess sees she has made a mistake, and played into the hands of her enemy.

"A lover, I suppose, come to seek charity now that you are mistress of a vast fortune. Take care, though," she goes on with a sneering laugh, "Noel doesn't like his preserves poached on."

But the Countess answers never a word, only stifles the groan that rises to her white lips, and hurries on through the calm sweetness of the summer's eve, and when she reaches the Castle goes in by a side entrance straight to her own room, and flinging herself on the lace-trimmed satin coverlet of her bed, buries her face in the pillow, moaning,—

"Can it be! Was it only a chance likeness, or can the dead come to life? Is the only joy my dreary existence has ever known over already. Must I leave the husband who is dearer to me than life! Oh, Heaven, pity me, spare me that!" and bursting into fresh sobs the Countess wrings her hands, and worn out by the violence of her emotions, after a time sinks into a sort of apathy, from which she is aroused by the voice of her maid, asking if my lady will dress for dinner.

"I am too ill, Marie, to appear to-night. Will you tell my lord so, and ask him to excuse me, and bring me a cup of strong tea! The heat, I think, has overpowered me."

"Yes, my lady," replies the discreet French-woman, gliding away to do her bidding.

"Marian seems quite overcome," observes the Earl to Lady Silver, after dinner.

"I suppose the walk to the village was too much for her."

"Yes," assents his cousin, with veiled spite, "or the sight of the handsome poacher's battered head."

"Ah, did you meet him as he was being taken to gaol? Poor darling, she did not tell me that. It was quite enough to upset her," and without waiting to hear more he moves away among his guests, followed by the gaze of a pair of cold eyes.

"Fool, fool! poor, infatuated fool!" mutters the possessor of them. "Be happy while you may, for I think you have married a woman who will be a blot on your scutcheon;" and following the Earl's example, she goes among the guests, and with inuendoes, shrugs of her shoulders, and half-finished sentences conveys to most of them the impression that there is some mystery at the back of Lady Marindin's sudden indisposition connected with her past life, which is not as reputable as it might be.

(To be continued.)

A PLAIN GIRL.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE AVENUE was long, and had many turns, purposely laid out to make it appear still longer.

As I rounded one of these bends and emerged from the trees, I came upon a full view of the castle, and was filled at once with a deep sense of disappointment of having been taken in by the name, which was far more high-sounding than the appearance of the mansion warranted.

True, there was a castle—a kind of square old tower, such as are plentifully besprinkled about all over Ireland, and are associated with the name of King John—a high, grey, solid kind of keep, with slits for windows above, and a few real windows down below, framed and glazed—a long, low, one-storied kind of cottage had run itself up against this venerable but not very imposing pile, and had imperceptibly taken its name.

The cottage had a deep front verandah, and

French windows opening to the ground, and was rather pretty in its way, and really occupied—the other was simply a sham. But stay. Was it out of one of those latticed windows something was waving in the evening breeze—something hanging out to dry—in short, a pair of stockings!

I was now sufficiently near to the hall-door to enter, and it stood back, blistered with the sun, and wide open.

Outside on the gravel were several broken or cracked plates; strewn here and there were three or four dogs, who now rushed out at me—had evidently been dining quite recently. How they barked! It was maddening to listen to them.

But undeterred by their fury, which I am thankful to say, was solely confined to barking, I rapped at the door with my knuckles. There was no knocker, and if there was a bell I could not find it; and after rapping and rapping, till my knuckles were sore, a shrill female voice from inside called out,—

"No eggs to-day, Biddy. Go away, and don't bother us!"

The voice sounded like Mary's, so I boldly walked in, and turned into a room at the right-hand of the hall. The door was ajar—they say Irish people never shut a door—I pushed it back, and marched in, bag in hand.

Two girls were busy over some paper pattern on a table, standing with their backs to me.

Neither of them was Mary, I could see that even before the tallest of them whirled round, scissors in hand, and said, in a tone of astonishment,—

"Mercy on us, who is this?"

"I am Ellen Dennis," I replied, colouring painfully.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the other. "Why she was married yesterday! We have just sent off to Boskell for the paper, to see the wedding."

"You might have spared yourselves the trouble," I said, sitting down, and depositing my bag on the floor, "if I had only come a little sooner. I changed my mind yesterday at the last moment, and ran away!"

The effect of this announcement on my cousins was comic in the extreme. One deliberately sat down on the floor in front of me, and clasping her knees with her hands, stared hard at me for fully two minutes; the other was still equal to keeping her feet, but kept ejaculating,—

"Well I never—no, never—never, never!"

"And why did you not marry him?" said the one from the floor at last. "What ailed him?"

"I hated him; and I found I could not at the last; so when Morris was dressing grandma I tore off my wedding-dress and veil, and got on the first things I could find and slipping downstairs whilst they were all busy with the breakfast, and came away here. I don't ask you to keep me," reddening, "only for a short time, till I look about and get something to do!"

"As what?"

"As governess or mother's help, or anything," vaguely.

"You can stay here and be as welcome as the flowers in May," said Maggie, now rising into an erect posture. "Only this place will be an awful change for you after Park-lane, and your grand dresses, and carriages and company. We heard all about you, and envied you the grand match you were going to make, I can tell you!"

"You need not have done that, then. It was grandma's doing, not mine. I would rather ten thousand times dig potatoes, like a woman I saw as I came along the road, than marry Mr. Bellamy. Money is not everything!"

"No, my sweet girl," said Maggie, suavely, "but it goes a long way. I only wish I had had your chance! I would have jumped at Mr. Bellamy and his thousands."

"Not if you knew him," I replied, eagerly. "It's all very well to say this here. If you had seen him."

"Why, was he so repulsive?" she interrupted, quickly.

"No, not exactly that, but he had such sleek, shy, cat-like ways and such claws! O o he got

you or any girl to marry him, you would be his mouse, and nothing else, as long as you lived."

"And that you would not be," said Jessie, the taller of the two. "In spite of old Mrs. Dennis. Where did you get the courage to run away? Where did you find the heart?"

"The courage of despair, I suppose!" I said, gravely.

"Well, she shan't get you if she comes here, you may rest assured of that. None of us are over and above fond of that old dame; and though we are paupers, I believe you'll be far more in you element here with us, grinding and sawing to keep up appearances, and to keep out of gaol, than with your granny in Park-lane. Mary is away in Belfast, but comes home soon. Father is away too. There's no one at home but mother. We must take you up to her—she is an invalid, you know—and see about getting you a good tea. You must be nearly dead. By the way, how did you get here!—you never walked from the station!"

Thereupon, as I followed her up a narrow winding stair, into the first and only available floor of the castle, I gave her a short, but vivid sketch of my adventures with Thaddy O'Brien and his colts, but for some reason that I could not exactly account for to myself, I said nothing of the queer stonebreaker who had escorted me to the back gates. Yet I was relieved to hear that although it had once been the principal avenue, there was another less tumble-down entrance.

My aunt's room was darkened by blinds and curtains, and on a sofa under the window she lay, covered up this warm evening with shawls and propped with pillows. She was a very tiny little creature—quite different to her buxom daughters—with a thin, delicate face and bright mouse-like eyes, and the infantile, taper hands loaded with rings. The furniture of the room was luxurious in its way—quite different to the bare, gaunt shabbiness that held its own downstairs.

Flowers were abundant; books, papers and magazines were piled within easy reach of the invalid—pretty pictures and sketches were crowded on the walls, and all manner of choice china and ornaments lay littered about.

The carpets were soft, the chairs most tempting. "Mother's dressing-room" was quite an oasis in the house—I beg its pardon—"the castle."

"Who do you think this is, mother!" said Maggie, as she led me forward. The little recumbent figure, with a black lace scarf over her head, started suddenly up, dropping a book on the floor with a heavy bang, gave a suppressed scream.

"It's Ellen!" she exclaimed. "Ellen come to life!" now shrieking up among her pillow, and making a movement of horror, as if to thrust her away.

"It's Ellen's daughter, mother—your niece Maggie, who has come to stay," said my cousin Maggie.

My aunt looked not unnaturally bewildered. "I thought—I thought," she faltered, "that she was married yesterday to Mr. Bellamy!"

"So did we," put in her daughter; "but at the last moment she found she really could not—you know we heard he was sixty—and she ran away to us, and here she is. Was she a wicked girl?" giving me a little push nearer the sofa. "Is she not, mother?"

"Come here to me, child. Kneel down—I can't reach you—and let me kiss you," smoothing away my hair. She continued, "You are as welcome as Ellen's daughter should be. I can't say more, only I'm afraid, after all your London experiences, you will find it dull enough here, and the children"—with a glance at her daughters—"wild—wild Irish girls. But, after all, you have the same blood in your own veins; it was very Irish of you to run away. Child! child! how appealingly like you are to your mother! I never saw anything so extraordinary; you have even that little mole on the temple I remember so well. We used to tease her about it, and she said it was for luck. Poor Ellen! We were girls together, and it brings back the best part of my life to look at

you. But I can't call you Ellen—you must be Nellie; and now, children, go and give Nellie her tea and then bring her back, that she may tell me more about herself. Be sure you make her very comfortable, and give her the blue bedroom," were her last injunctions.

"I think we had better tell Nellie at once," said cousin Maggie, as she poured out the tea in a very shabby, bare-looking dining-room, and we discussed hot cakes, which were brought in in relays by a red-armed, bare-footed Irish girl.

"We are fearfully poor, Nellie—poorer than mother thinks, poorer than anyone dreams of; and we will make no stranger of you, and take you into our confidence at once."

"You see, latterly papa has been getting deeper and deeper into difficulties. What with bad farming of his own, and tenants paying no rents, and his borrowing money to pay off mortgages, and borrowing more to pay off that, it has been dreadful, and any little capital he had left has long ago run away like water into sand."

"Papa himself has become quite hopeless. He just walks round the place as if he were in his sleep, with his hands in his pocket, and his head bent as if he was looking on the ground for a much needed five-pound note. In fact, he has given up the attempt of trying to make both ends meet, and we three girls steer the ship, or rather the wreck of state, now."

"And your mother?"

"Mother is in blissful ignorance of this awful state of affairs. If she knew it it would kill her. She has not been downstairs for three years, and we manage to keep up appearances in her two rooms; and she has a neat servant, and neat little diners, and her books and papers, and all that, but it's a most desperate struggle to manage all, I can tell you."

"And here I am—another burthen," I cried. "However, at any rate, I have a pair of hands, and I will work as hard as any galley slave if you will only show me what I may do."

"I am afraid our work is not much in your line, dear. We garden, not for amusement, with a little trowel and a pretty hat and apron, but in hard, sober, earnest, honest toil. We plant and prune, and dig and weed, for we have a very good market for our fruit, and vegetables and flowers at the Barracks over at Bookell, about five miles away. Every Wednesday being market day, Biddy, the red-armed, drives in a mule-car, piled with our produce, and I am thankful to tell you, returns with her pockets full of silver and coppers."

"Yes, and we want it—every halfpenny, for it is all the ready-money we can see," said Janie; "and what with wine for mother, Lucy's wages, and groceries and butcher's meat, it soon runs through our fingers."

"We have not enough left even to buy ourselves decent gloves or hats. Everything going out, nothing coming in, is the story here, and, positively, no two or three farm-girls are poorer, in solemn earnest, than the Misses Bourke of the Castle."

"And Miss Dennis," I put in. "I am, if anything, poorer. This is your home—your chairs and tables, your land," pointing out of the window. "I have literally nothing in the world but my wits."

"And your pretty face," amended Maggie.

"Oh, that won't bring me in much," I said, with a shrug; "but I am resolved to help you as long as you will let me, and I'll put my shoulder to the wheel to-morrow. If you are short of cash I have here nine sovereigns," spreading them on the table, and pushing them over to Maggie. "You make no stranger of me, remember; and if you make any fuss," seeing from her countenance that she was going to expostulate, "I shall just take my bag (it's not unpacked) and walk away."

"It's too much; but I'll take it, Nellie, thankfully. We want turf, new harness for Mickey the mule, new boots ourselves so badly, and there's a bill for mother's wine. It takes a load off my mind," heaving a deep sigh.

"And maybe I'll be able to pay her back out of the bees," said her sister, in a hopeful voice. "I expect they will turn up trumps; and then,

you know, the grapes!" in a tone that implied that the grapes were to do wonders.

"Where is uncle?" I asked, abruptly.

"He has gone to Dublin, poor dear man! to see the family solicitor, and to try and find a way out of all this muddle. If he might only sell the place, but he may not. It's entailed on me," she added, with a laugh, "and is mortgaged, I'm afraid, up to the very chimney-pot."

"And Mary is away on a visit, you said!"

"That is one way of looking at it; but the sad fact is that poor dear Mary, thanks to going to your Madame Davenport, has a certain amount of accomplishments that we, her elders, cannot boast of. She can play, she can sing little ditties, she can dabble in water-colours, and Mary is in a situation,"—lowering her voice—"as governess in the family of a rich linen-bleacher. Poor Molly does not like it, but she has a good salary, and sends us home money regularly every quarter."

"And her old dresses," added her sister, "and not half had ones. Mary was always the dresser of this family," glancing at her own very faded, shabby serge.

I cast a thought to the days when Mary had disported herself in my garments. What ages ago it seemed! I had had such strange, varied experiences since then. Events in my life had latterly marched very quickly.

"Nellie is dying for sleep. We must take her to Mary's room," said Maggie; "it's quite ready. Mother shall hear all her adventures to-morrow."

So saying I was led down one or two steps, and along a passage, and shown into a very clean, small, bare apartment, my cousin Mary's bower, and in ten minutes I was in bed—in fifteen I was asleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

I DULY related my history to my aunt, who listened to it with the deepest interest; made me tell portions of it over and over again, and specially dwelt upon the contents of my jewel case, and gave very full and detailed particulars of every gown in my trousseau.

"What is to be done with them?" she asked, repeatedly. "They won't be taken back by the dressmaker, your grandmamma cannot wear them herself; why should she not send them after you? They are no use to anyone but you."

"From what I know of grandmamma she would rather put them in the fire. I believe she will never allow my name to be mentioned to her again in her hearing, as long as we both shall live."

"Well, at any rate, she shall see it," said my aunt, with sudden resolution. "I shall write to her this very post. Hand me my blotter, and put the inkstand on the table like a good girl."

I tried to turn her from her purpose, but I might as well have addressed myself to the wall; write she would and did.

It gave me a curious feeling as I sat and watched her, her delicate white hands and sparkling diamond rings flying over the very best cream-laid paper, and compared those hands and her surroundings with those of her daughters, who were now helping Biddy with the churn in the back kitchen.

The letter was sent and the answer that came by return of post was so terrific in language, so cutting in its vindictiveness, so little complimentary to me, that its recipient, with a streak of colour in her pale cheeks and with trembling fingers, tore it to small pieces and ordered it at once into the fire, and this was the end of our intercourse with grandmamma.

I soon became quite an expert gardener, and learnt to wield a spade or "segg," as they are called in Ireland, as well as either Maggie or Jane. I was a favourite with the bees, and not a bad hand at the churn. I quite entered into my new life, and was as keen about packing the market-cart, and as anxious about the result of Biddy's "day" as either of my cousins.

I wore an old gown of Mary's (turn about was fair play), a big apron and a sun bonnet, and with my tanned, scratched hands, and healthy

country colour, was as unlike the languid Miss Dennis, of Park lane, as it was possible to be.

I threw all my energies into gardening for money. I made bouquets, button-holes; I packed up asparagus, I picked fruit, and I helped materially to increase the weekly earnings. Indeed, so successful were we that we had, thanks to my advice, attempted some great improvements indoors, after we had paid off all our bills. I was quick at my needle, and Jane was a born upholsteress. We bought some pretty cheap chairs and recovered all the chairs in the drawing-room; we manufactured, with old boxes, nails and red velvet and fringe, some capital tables; we turned and re-turned the carpet and bought a new rug; and, in short, as Maggie said, "if only there was a coat of paint on the hall-door papa won't know the place when he comes back, and it's all your doing, Nellie. You have the energy of three, and the cleverness of sixteen other girls. You see, besides, we, living so much in the backwoods, and keeping no company now have nearly forgotten what it is to have anything pretty about us. Really, I can hardly keep my eyes off the drawing-room; and all it cost was two pounds, and brains and clever fingers. If we only had a new piano! But of course we might as well wish for the moon."

"Now I must go and look after business," she said, rising. "The mule-cart starts at five to-morrow morning."

"Are the bouquets and the grapes ready, Nellie?" said Maggie.

"Yes, I packed them just before tea," I replied. "They look lovely—a perfect picture. Biddy will hardly be able to carry home all the money to-morrow. I should not wonder if between grapes, and honey, and butter, not to speak of the vegetables, we cleared five pounds!"

The words were scarcely out of my mouth when Jane rushed back with a face of the greatest dismay.

"Girls, what do you think has happened! Biddy has tumbled over that horrible step into the turf house and sprained her ankle. There she is now moaning and groaning in the front kitchen. Where is the arnica, Maggie!—and all the arnica in the world won't make her fit to take the cart in to-morrow. What are we to do! I feel ready to cry."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Maggie, hunting in a cupboard. "It's just like our luck—the best load of the season and no one to take it, and all our butter and fruit, not to speak of the cream and flowers, will spoil. Oh! it's too, too provoking."

"Couldn't Lucy?" I suggested, but my words died away on my lips.

Lucy was a smart, beautiful Dublin maid, only fit for one thing—attending to aunts, and opening the hall door at a pinch, but this was seldom required; firstly, because it nearly always stood open, and, secondly, because but few visitors now troubled the Castle.

Friends were absent or dead, or afraid of being asked to lend money, and, beyond the rector and one or two old ladies from Boskell, no one now crossed the threshold.

"Lucy!" echoed Maggie, contemptuously, "you might as well suggest mother. There's nothing for it but to unload the cart and fish out what will keep. We may as well use the rest," she said, practically.

"Only I'd be known in any disguise I'd go myself," said Jane, stoutly.

"Of course you would be known, and a nice fuss there would be—the two Misses Holt posting over here express to tell mamma. The fat would be in the fire then."

"I would say I did it for a joke."

"Look here, girls," I said, speaking with decision. "I am very lucky at doing rash things, as you know, and I am no coward, and you both say I can mimic Biddy's brogue to the life, don't you? I'll go."

"You! what nonsense! What do you know of marketing, or driving the mule, or anything!"

"He will be the easiest part of it, and I know

the prices as well as yourselves. The shops that take the butter and eggs I have been in."

"And how about the barracks?" nodding her head.

"Oh, I'll not go up there. I'll stay in the market, and, never fear, they'll come down looking for Biddy O'Mara's fruit and flowers. 'Tis little they guess they are dealing with the Misses Burke," imitating Biddy's own brogue to a T.

"Certainly, you can act to the life, and you are a very bold, sharp girl, Nellie, but what about your make up?" asked Maggie, doubtfully.

"Oh, I'll soon manage that—the old garden dress, apron, and sun bonnet. Leave it all to me, and see if I don't come home with my pocket full of money."

Biddy's awe and amazement, and ejaculations when she heard who was to be her substitute were something extraordinary.

She and I were about the same height, but I really flatter myself that our figures were quite on a different scale.

However, a shawl twisted round me would give me a portly look, and greedily I took all Biddy's hints and advice with the greatest interest, from her suggestions with regard to driving the mule, to what what I was "not to take less than" on the butter and "sperry grass," and to "mind myself with the officer's servants," they were the devil to deal with—aye, and some of the ladies were great at bargaining—and how the mess sergeant was liberal, and bought five shillings' worth of flowers for the table at the very last, and much more in the same strain from Biddy, who nursed and all but cured her ankle between whistles.

Behold me, then, starting from the yard in the early grey of a September morning, seated on one side of the ear, and prodding the reluctant mule with a blunt stick, by Biddy's advice.

My two cousins stood in the gateway, and wished me safe home and every luck in the world and Jane even went so far as to divest herself of her shoe and throw it after me. I saw her subsequently hopping along the damp, dewy drive, to pick it up.

My run-up was a success, though I was not "as like Biddy as they could have wished." It would be odd if I was—I, the London belle, to resemble flat-faced, freckled, red-haired, ugly Biddy.

I did not aim at personating her; I was "just a friend of Biddy's" that was my rôle.

I browned my face, pushed my hair well back, pulled my sun bonnet well forward, twisted a thick shawl round my waist and shoulders, and flattered myself that I would pass.

Even without the proverbial shoe the mule was not to be hurried. Two miles an hour was his pace, and progressed in a pattern of "sandyke's," from side to side of the road. He had no more idea of going straight than a crab, and had every idea of having his own way.

However, allowing two hours for four miles, we would be in time enough if we were in Boskell at seven o'clock.

I met (or was overtaken, I should say,) by a good many people going my way, who at first took me for Biddy, and were disposed—I mean the "bhoys"—to waste my time in idle dalliance, listening to their blarney and jokes; but I soon showed them I was not Miss O'Hara, and gave them to thoroughly understand that I neither wanted their company or their compliments, and had then a taste of the rough sides of their tongues, and was the subject of not a few gibes.

"Oh, masha! How grand we are!"

"Take care of that mule, he'll maybe run away with you!"

"Faix, if he does," said another, "no one will dispute her with him."

"May be 'tis a lady she is, all out!" said a third; a shot in the dark that made my face burn.

"Any ways, if she is," said a woman, carrying a creek, "she has a fine aisy seat on an ass's car; 'tis used to it she is!"

I was naturally by no means sorry to find myself jogging over the cobble stones of Boskell high and dirty street.

To my astonishment the mule of his own accord

rose "a trot for the town," and rattled me up to the market-place in gallant style, where, as the business was already brisk, I was permitted to take my station without any disagreeable notice or disparaging remarks.

I soon set about unpacking, arranging and laying-out my wares with, I am sure, more haste than Biddy displayed.

I fed the mule with a lock of hay I had brought for his breakfast, and then I took my place behind the cart, and impatiently, yet nervously, awaited customers.

CHAPTER XIV.

CUSTOMERS came—came and purchased, came and haggled—and were so keen about bargains—tasting the butter, plucking the plums, and smelling the flowers—that they hardly noticed that I was a stranger; and I, gaining confidence, aired by brogue freely, keeping my face well under the shade of my big sun-bonnet. I even had the audacity to banter, and to argue, and to drive some capital bargains.

Remember that I was half Irish, and it came quite natural to me to blarney my customers.

One or two asked me, "Where was Biddy?" and what part of the country I came from; but I evaded all cross-questions beautifully; filled my apron pockets rapidly and was enjoying myself extremely.

I had wheedled the mess waiter into buying half my grapes at one-and-sixpence per pound; sold him three lovely bouquets for nine shillings, telling him "it was a sin and a shame for him to take them at the price, but I could not refuse him, as I had no market for flowers that day."

"Then you have a quick tongue in your head, surely," he said. "You've talked me out of no less than five-and-twenty-shillings," slowly counting out the money. "I wonder what the mess president will say to me!"

Presently two or three officers came and stood close round my cart.

This was not quite so pleasant. I never bargained for them.

They talked *sotto voce* (but I heard them) of my Irish eyes, my small hands.

I kept my head well-down, and feigned not to notice them.

"Hullo! Nora Creina, Eily O'Connor, Kathleen O'More, or whatever is your name, how much are the flowers!" taking up a bouquet. "Awfully fond of flowers," burying his nose in them as he spoke.

"Five shillings," I replied, without raising my head.

"Here you are," he said, taking out two half-crowns; and I'll give you another half-crown for a look in your face, a cush la macrae. Isn't that pure Irish?" and he laughed disagreeably.

I took no notice whatever; I never even turned my head. And I heard a voice say, "It's a shame to chaff her;" and another, "Hullo! here are the Miss Morrises. Come along; your bouquet is the very thing."

And I looked up, and they were gone; and the two half-crowns were lying in the place where the bouquet had been.

I breathed freely. And now if I only had the rest of my flowers sold, and the rest of my vegetables, I would leave the butter and eggs at the grocers, according to orders, and jog home, on the whole, crowned with success. But, alas! the fame of my charms had been noised abroad, and I beheld several gentlemen and two very gaily got up ladies coming straight towards me, the ladies laughing loudly at some excellent joke.

"Brought you some new customers," said that hateful voice. "Are not these lovely flowers, Miss Fanny? Permit me to offer you a bouquet."

Then there was a good deal of giggling and choosing. Two bouquets were taken, and only one remained.

"Here George, you had better have it," said that odious, creaky kind of voice. "I'm doing the selling, you see. The fair flower-girl is deaf



"MISS DENNIS! CAN I BELIEVE MY EYES!" EXCLAIMED CAPTAIN KARLAKE.

and dumb, and won't even look at her customers."

I raised my head and straightened my long neck (I had a long neck), and looked right across the cart straight into this man's face with all the indignation I felt compressed into what he so gallantly termed my "Irish" eyes.

I saw facing me a tall, thin, rather bent man of about forty-five, with foreign, Spanish-looking features—a dark skin, dark delicate eyes, and hair thickly powdered with grey—a handsome man with a villainous countenance. He embodied my idea of Mephistopheles the instant my eyes fell upon him.

As they did a most startling change came over his face. It became of a kind of livid lemon-colour; his eyes seemed as if about to spring out of their sockets; his forehead contracted, his lips worked, and he clung with both hands to the edge of the cart.

What did this mean? Never in my life, to the best of my belief, had we ever met before. Of course, his agitation was noticed by his friends—two (not specially) young women, in rowdy sailor hats, with gay bands, and very tight jackets.

I set them down in my mind's eye as what I had often heard of, but never seen, i.e., "garrison hacks."

I noticed now another face behind theirs—noticed it with horror—on my side. It was Captain Karlake—my Captain Karlake—I mean the only one I knew—in undress cavalry uniform. This newly-arrived regiment was his, apparently. Oh, how I hoped that he had not recognised me!

"A spam," said Mephistopheles, in answer to hurried questions. "It will be nothing," turning quickly away. "An old complaint. Ah, I'll just ask you to excuse me, and I'll go into the nearest chemist's."

But it was not an old complaint, much less a spam, I was convinced. It had something to do with me. But what? Beyond that bare fact, of which I was quite positive, I was as completely in the dark as I well could be.

Only for the inopportune glimpse of Captain Karlake all had gone well. I had actually made seven pounds, a sum far beyond our wildest expectations.

As I sat on the shaft of the cart carefully counting my gains previous to departure, a familiar voice said—

"Miss Dennis! Can I believe my eyes?"

I started up, resolved to braven it out, and holding my head sideways, and giving a view of nothing but the profile of my headgear, said, in my richest brogue,—

"What does your honour mane?"

"It's no use—I know you. I would know your eyes among a million," he said, composedly. "Do not be afraid that I shall betray you; only do—do, for goodness sake, explain to an old friend. Is it one of your old practical jokes, of which I was so often the victim at the Maxwells?"

"I cannot explain," I returned, in my natural voice, now looking at him with some degree of shyness.

"The last time I saw Miss Dennis she was the belle of one of the sweetest balls of last season, was dressed in satin, was blazing with magnificent diamonds, and was about to marry a millionaire. The next time I see her she is got up as an Irish peasant, brogue and all complete, and is selling vegetables from a cart at an open market in a little country town. This metamorphose surely requires some slight interpretation!"

"My eccentricities are no business of yours," I said, sharply. "I shall require you to respect my secret, and my incognito, Captain Karlake."

"You won't tell me where you live?"

"No!" jingling my coppers in my apron pocket.

"And you never married Bellamy after all?"

"No! Do I look like it?"

"You ran away the morning of the wedding, and there was the deuce to pay."

"So I suppose."

"You will never be able to show your face in town for years," he added, with a laugh.

"I never want to see it again, so that is no loss. And now, if you will be so good as to go away, I want to pack up and start. I rely upon your honour never to mention this," touching my dress as I spoke, "and not to try and discover where I live."

"You may rely on my honour in both instances," he replied, rather stiffly, and, removing his cap with a most crushing politeness to the market-girl, he walked away.

I sold my eggs and butter, and jogged home, and was told by one of my fellow-travellers, who overtook me as usual, that the Colonel of the Hussars was tearing down the whole place looking for me.

"For me?" I echoed, shrilly.

"Yes, for you, the flower-girl."

"What is he like?"

"Oh, you know well enough. He is the black, ugly man, with the grey hair and the stoop—colonel of the horse soldiers. Kant is his name. He was wild to find you; but no one could tell him a haphorth, and they said if he was so anxious you'll be sure to be there next week."

"Not at all so sure," I said to myself.

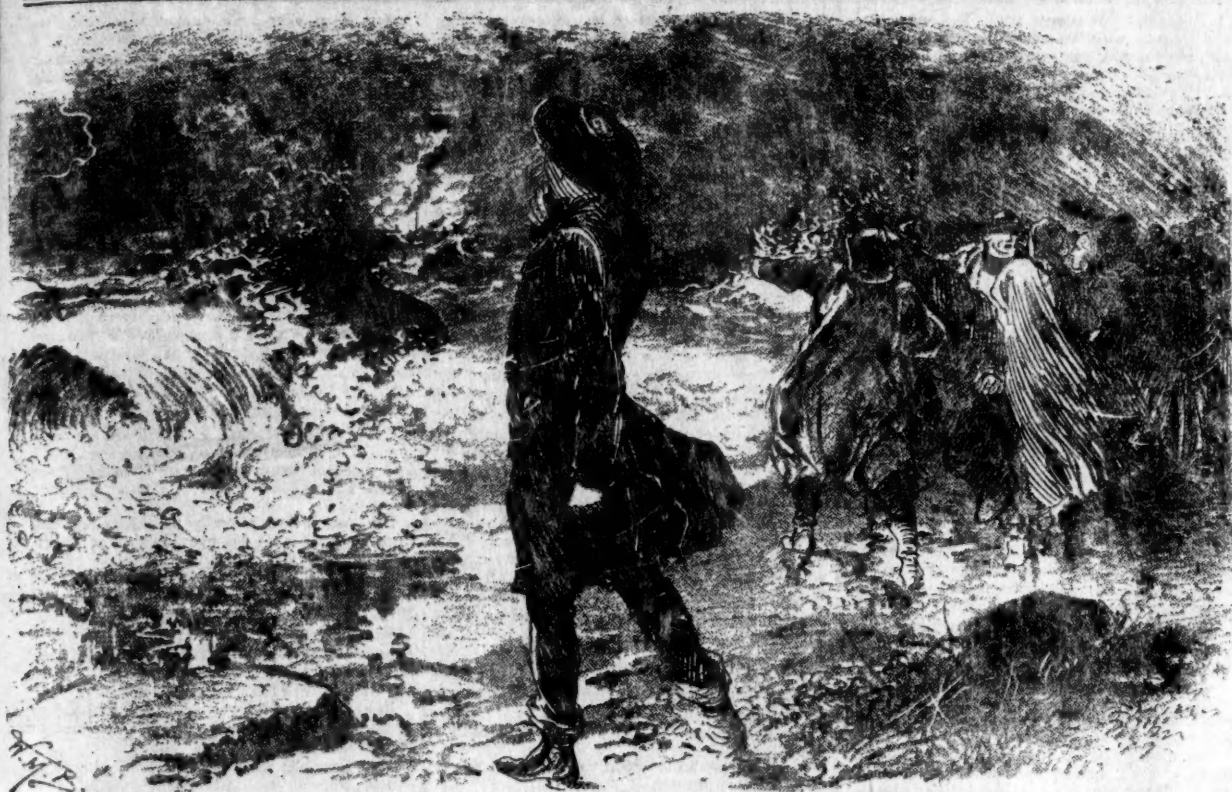
"You must have made a pretty penny, alannah. You had all the quality jostling each other for flowers round your cart."

"Not so much as I might; but I've not done too badly."

Nor had I. Jane and Maggie were in ecstasies, and hugged me like bears when I counted out my money and related all my adventures and all about my customers; but I never said a word about my unfortunate *rencontre* with Captain Karlake, nor the odd effect my appearance had had upon Colonel Kant!

(To be continued.)

THE romantic gondolas of Venice are being rapidly displaced by little steamboats.



A BRIGHT GLARE LIT UP THE INKY HEAVENS, AND A SHRIEK OF FIERCING AGONY ROSE HIGH ABOVE THE ROAR OF THE SEA.

THE GOLDEN LURE.

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CHAPTER III.

DURING her residence at Sandhill House Jane became a new creature. The flush of health returned to her thin cheeks, and the charm of youth pervaded body and spirit.

The old bachelor watched curiously. "A woman is a singular creature," he thought, noting the added bloom and the sparkling, vivacious mood of his youthful housekeeper. "Upon the whole it's rather pleasant to have one in the house. I'll see that she don't go away very soon."

The life at Sandhill was very pleasant. The surgeon gradually withdrew from his reserve with his fellow mortals outside the pale of his beloved profession, and mingled more with the world. Twice he gave a select little party, and Jane became acquainted with a number of the neighbouring people.

So things went on for nearly a year, then something happened which caused the surgeon to look grave.

By accident he discovered Brownell's advertisement. An undefinable suspicion took possession of his mind. Jane noticed his altered demeanour, and felt both wounded and angry.

"What have I done?" she asked bitterly, "that he should look upon me with so much suspicion as he evidently does!"

Evlin despatched a letter to Brownell, and then waited patiently for a reply.

In the meantime Jane was deprived of her household duties, and, unknown to herself, there came one day to Sandhill an old lady in faded black, who, by the authority of Evlin took charge of the keys and assumed the control of the house.

Jane wept woefully when this happened. "I am no longer useful," she thought, "and I am reminded in this way that I am not wanted." Things stood thus when Evlin received his reply.

He called Jane into the library on the evening of its receipt.

"I desire to speak to you on a little private matter, Miss Brent," he said, as Jane came in.

She had been expecting it, and steeled herself to hear the very worst.

"I have long known that the time had nearly come when my services would be dispensed with, and I would say now that I thank you sincerely for all you have done, and will go immediately," she burst forth, striving to control her unsteady tones.

Evlin looked up in astonishment.

"Why, Miss Brent, I cannot imagine what you mean," said he, in surprise. "I did not call you in here to receive your 'discharge,' as you seem to think, but to tell you of a great fortune that has come to you."

It was now Jane's turn to be astonished.

"Will you kindly explain?" she said.

He took the lawyer's letter from his pocket, with a copy of a newspaper, showing her first the advertisement. Brownell's letter read as follows:

"October 20th, 18—.

"EDWARD EVLIN, Esq.—Dear Sir,—Yours of the 1st was duly received and its contents noted. I was surprised at the information it contained, but sincerely rejoice to learn that the long-sought heir of Marshmellow is found at last.

"The legacy is a very valuable one, consisting of the old manor house and a hundred thousand pounds in bank. Agreeably to the directions in the will of the deceased John Marsh, the rents and interest money are being collected this year for the first time by Ernest Ingelow, who if the rightful heir failed to make his or her appearance was to inherit the above-mentioned estate and bank account. The young lady has only to come forward, prove her right, and establish herself at the Hall.

"I would advise her to make no delay whatever in presenting her claims. In the meantime, hoping to hear from you immediately,

"I remain, yours respectfully,

"ADAM BROWNELL, Attorney."

Jane quivered like an aspen leaf.

"A hundred thousand pounds!" she ejaculated. "What shall I do with such a sum?"

Evlin smiled.

"What a natural question you ask. A woman's first idea is to get rid of what she has, and—"

"Inveigle somebody into giving her something more," interrupted the girl, with a saucy shrug of her shoulders.

"I was not going to make so rude a speech as that, Miss Brent, but since you have finished the sentence to your liking you may let it stand as it is," he retorted. "But to business, young lady. You have to prove that you are the veritable 'Jane Brent' before you inherit all those numerous pounds the lawyer mentions in his letter, and now pray tell me can you do it?"

"A very easy matter, sir, as I will show you," said she, leaving the room.

Presently she returned, carrying in her hands the little brass-bound ebony box, which she set on the table, and, unlocking it, took out some yellow, worn papers, which she showed then to the surgeon.

They proved to be the marriage certificate of her parents and a record of her birth and baptism.

Then there were letters from John Marsh, written to his sister Jane, while she was yet at school—several more of a later date, when he was making a foreign tour, and various mementoes and keepsakes which the dead woman had retained in memory of her only relative, cherishing them with a jealous care, little thinking of the service they would some day be to her daughter.

"I don't apprehend any difficulty in establishing my identity," said she, refolding them and locking them up again. "I imagine it will be easy enough with these things."

"And when will you start?" asked Evlin, in a constrained tone.

"To-night, can't I?"

Jane smoothed her hair, and settled the knot of ribbon at her throat with a little jerk.

"To-night? Of course not. You must prepare yourself with an escort first. I could not think of your going alone. Some scoundrel would surely swindle you out of your ebony box and birthright too."

Jane pondered over the matter.

"No, I cannot go alone. But I do not know anyone whom I could rely upon that I could get to accompany me."

Evlin walked slowly down the room.

"No, Jane Brent," he said, impressively, "you are alone and friendless, but"—he paused near her chair—"do not alarm yourself unnecessarily about your journey; I will see that you are provided for."

"You are very good. I hardly know how your many kindnesses will ever be repaid."

"Nonsense! Think no more after that fashion, I implore you. If there is any one thing I detest more than another it is to be thanked for some act or word I may have done or said. A good deed brings its own reward, my young friend, remember that. If I choose to make other people glad occasionally, don't I have the pleasure of thinking the matter over and taking all the credit to myself?"

Evlin's voice sounded very gruff and queer, and she strained her eyes in the dim twilight trying to peer into his countenance.

But it was as hard and expressionless as the face of an Egyptian sphinx, and she gave up trying to study his eccentric moods and turned her thoughts to her new-found treasure.

"It is a great deal of money," she mused. "I shall hardly know what to do with it myself when I get it."

Then she thought of the quiet life at Sandhill—that would be done away with for ever, for Marshmellow Hall and the bank account were a long way removed from her present home.

There was a class of little folks in the Sabbath School at the chapel that she would never teach again, and the boys in the Ragged School she had prided herself so much upon would have to be resigned into the care of another.

And her usual round to the poor of the neighbourhood, where she distributed the greater part of the salary the surgeon allowed her, she would miss when she took up the new life that was waiting for her beyond the sea.

A feeling of regret and homesickness took possession of her soul.

"I've a notion not to go," she said, a soft sigh fluttering from her lips; "but let Ingersol have it all and stay where I am."

"A most unwise conclusion, young lady, and one that will not be allowed," said Evlin's deep voice from behind the heavy curtains. "I have already made preparations for your journey and you will go to-morrow."

Jane started suddenly.

"So soon!" cried she, in terror.

"Yes, I have found someone to conduct you straight to the lawyer."

"And I shall never come here again to see you more," she said, as she bowed her head and went.

The surgeon walked across the floor, and stood beside her chair.

"Jane Brent, the heiress of a hundred thousand pounds, has no one to please but herself, and if at any time you choose to return to this old house at Sandhill you will be welcome—more welcome than you can ever know," and he paused for a moment. "Or if you ever really need me in any way do not fail to let me know it, and I will come at your call."

"I will," said she, solemnly. "I surely will."

CHAPTER IV.

TIME passed and nothing was heard of Miss Brent. Ingersol gradually dropped his fears concerning her appearance, and assumed the control of the old manor house.

Two years and more had elapsed, and the rent-rolls were at his command, and the young man began renovating the interior of the Hall. It was newly papered, plastered, and painted.

Elegant furniture replaced the time-worn, dingy things that had served Marsh for so many years, and statuary and pictures gleamed throughout the rooms in beauty and profusion. Old servants were discharged, and more active ones took their places.

Ernest Ingersol was looked upon with no little respect by his neighbours, and many a fair belle would have gladly become the mistress of Marshmellow at his asking.

It was a glorious October day. The sun shone brightly over the quiet meadows, and the uplands lay bathed in a sea of yellow splendour. The leaves, turning to crimson and gold, fell in rustling showers as the light breeze awayed through the branches.

Ingersol paced slowly up and down the stone terrace. He viewed the luxuriant gardens and spreading fields with an exultant eye.

"All these broad acres will yet be mine," he said to himself. "They are mine now, for I believe that no one will ever step in between the Marshmellow lands and me. I am monarch of all I survey," in truth. After all my years of patient waiting, after all my plans—after that one—"

He stopped, a strange pallor overspreading his sallow face.

"I will not think of it," he muttered. "No one knows but me. I will not betray myself now, and the old man rests well in his stone coffin. What matters if he did go to his long sleep a little sooner than he would—aha! if what?"

He laughed cruelly.

A low, open carriage was being driven slowly up the road. He noted the easy stride of the single horse before it a little curiously.

"Company," muttered he. "I wonder who it can be!"

He paced to-and-fro upon the terrace, listlessly watching its approach.

"There's something familiar about it," he thought, stopping abruptly and scanning its only occupant—a man in a light grey suit, with a high-crowned hat and gold-rimmed spectacles. "It is Adam Brownell. What is up, I wonder!"

The lawyer rode on through the gates and came up the level drive; then, flinging the reins to the stable boy, he entered the walk and joined Ingersol on the terrace.

"Good-evening, sir."

Ingersol bowed politely and extended his hand.

"Very happy to meet you, Mr. Brownell," said he, ushering him into the house; "but I cannot imagine to what I am indebted for the pleasure of your company this afternoon."

Brownell took the proffered seat.

"Business, Mr. Ingersol," smiled the lawyer.

Ingersol's heart quaked with a sudden fear.

"Excuse me a moment, and I will order a luncheon," he replied as he turned to the door.

The attorney shook his head in the negative.

"Really, it is not worth while. I have only a moment to stay; and, in fact, I require nothing at present. Please remain."

Something in his countenance bade Ingersol prepare for bad news; but he was one of those men who put a bold front on and jeer even in the face of adverse fate.

"I know of nothing in the business line that connects your interests and mine," he said, with a shrug.

"Perhaps not," replied the lawyer, absently.

Ernest took a turn across the floor. A new idea struck him.

"You surely haven't come to tell me that the bank has broken, and some defaulting cashier absconded with the hundred thousand pounds," said he, in a cold and haughty tone.

The lawyer rubbed his hands softly together.

"No, Mr. Ingersol, the hundred thousand pounds are safe. Marshmellow Hall is blooming like a garden, and the rents and interests have all been collected and paid to you. I did not come to see you because of any of the above-mentioned articles. I came to tell you—"

He paused, an ineffable look of triumph beaming in his countenance.

"I have come to tell you that I have found the heiress of Marshmellow."

Had a powder-mine exploded at his feet Ingersol could not have been more astonished.

His face became deadly pale, his knees shook under him, and dark circles appeared around his eyes.

"Found Jane Brent?" he gasped.

The lawyer drew Evlin's letter from his leather case, and handed it to Ingersol.

His eager eyes devoured its contents with a glance.

"True," he whispered, in an unsteady voice, "We may expect her at any time."

Drops of perspiration stood thickly over his forehead, and his tongue seemed parched with heat.

The lawyer pitted his emotion.

"I am sorry for you, Ingersol. It's a pity you should lose this fine old estate now that you have laboured and expended so much to make it so beautiful. I almost wish Miss Brent had remained in the background for a while yet."

Ingersol waved his hand.

"Don't, I beg of you. If Miss Brent has really come, then Miss Brent must have her own, that's all. But she must prove herself to be all she claims she is," said Ernest, in a dry, hard voice.

Brownell looked covertly at the young man from the corner of his eye; something in the voice made him suspicious.

"She says she has the certificate of her birth and baptism, also of the marriage of her parents. Moreover, as Mrs. Brent was wedded in the old town below, it will be an easy matter—a very easy matter—for her to prove herself the heiress."

"Oh, yes, I haven't a doubt."

Ingersol seemed to recover himself; his colour came back to his face and strength returned to his limbs.

The hundred thousand pounds, though in danger, were not wholly lost to him yet.

He would not give up all for lost, but battle bravely for what might ultimately become his own.

Jane Brent had not yet come. That much was certain.

If she failed to make her appearance the hundred thousand pounds were his.

The thought gave him energy. Better to fight and lose than to have to know that if he had but managed rightly the princely fortune would not have been lost to him at all.

The lawyer was looking him sharply in the face. It would not do to allow him to read his thoughts too closely.

Ingersol gazed for a few moments from the open window.

When at last he turned to his companion all evidence of his late agitation had disappeared, and he seemed perfectly calm.

"We cannot always have things as we would like them, Mr. Brownell," he said, quietly.

"It is true that I have hoped to inherit this great fortune eventually. Unconsciously I have reared many a glittering castle, whose shining walls are now a shattered ruin. Nobody likes to see the hopes and expectation of months destroyed with one blow as mine are now. But I'll endeavour to bear my misfortune like a man, thinking that what is my loss is some one else's gain."

"Well said," cried Brownell, his suspicions completely overcome by Ingersol's words and manner. "I honour you more than I can express for the manner in which you sustain your misfortune. There are few who could tolerate the idea of losing that vast legacy without emotion. I could not, were I in your place—and I think you are a brave man, sir."

A queer, inexplicable look shot over Ingersol's face.

"Thank you, Mr. Brownell, for your good opinion, but I profess to be no better than other men, and surely there is no bravery displayed in bearing calmly the supposed loss of something I have never owned. But you have not yet told me when the lady is to be expected, or do you not know yourself? I must find out so that I may prepare for her a suitable welcome."

Ingersol looked steadily from the window,

and the lawyer could not see his face, but his voice was clear and distinct.

"I have written to her to come here immediately, and would not be surprised if she were here in a week. A hundred thousand pounds are a vast amount of money, and most women would be very eager to put their hands on it. I will notify it to you as soon as I hear from her, so that you can have everything in readiness to receive her."

The lawyer rose, shook hands with his host, and getting into his carriage, rode away.

Ingersol stood for a time gazing from the open window; then, flinging open the door, he went out on the terrace and paced down the acacia walk, his head bowed upon his breast, his hands folded mechanically behind him, and his thoughts lost in perfecting his new scheme.

He walked late.

The stars illumined the blue vault of heaven, and the late moon peeped over the far-off hillside ere he went in.

The salt sea-winds blew chilly over the moorland, and mingling with the damp night air, pierced him coldly; but he heeded them not, muttering between his set teeth,—

"The hundred thousand pounds shall yet be mine!"

CHAPTER V.

ONE day in November Adam Brownell in his law office at Chichester received a short despatch apprising him of the coming of Jane Brent. The young lady would stop for a few days at Liverpool, and the barrister was requested to meet her there, and conduct her in safety to her destined home.

She had taken passage in the *Fire Fly*, and was even now outward bound.

The lawyer sent a note containing the message, to Ingersol, bidding him make his preparations accordingly, and then waited for the time when the vessel was due.

From the shining deck Jane watched the mighty sea of waters around her.

A very fleshy man stood leaning against the railing watching her.

"You were never on the water before, were you, miss?"

His voice was very respectful, and he raised his hat as he asked the question.

"Yes, sir," said Jane, half-frightened, and retreating toward her apartment, which she hastily entered, and closed the door.

Finally she emerged again, and in company with one of the ladies of the party took a quiet promenade on deck.

She had not made more than three turns when she saw him again seemingly bigger and fatter than before.

This time he came directly toward her, holding in his extended hand a lady's pocket handkerchief.

"Miss Brent," said he, in a perfectly distinct and singularly familiar tone, "allow me to restore this article. You dropped it a short time ago."

She took the proffered bit of lace and muslin, bowing her thanks, all the time wondering how in the world the creature knew her name, and where she had ever known him.

She was not sea-sick like many of the passengers, and while they lay in their respective berths she strolled upon the deck and amused herself for hours with looking out over the vast expanse of waters.

The fat man was always near her.

Though he never intended, yet wherever she went he followed—if she dropped anything he was the one to get it, and when she would converse he was lively, sociable and highly entertaining.

He was well acquainted with the places where she had lived, knew people who were her friends, and professed to be on most intimate terms with Dr. Evlin.

"Singular creature," thought Jane; "I wonder who you are, and where you came from."

She both liked and disliked him,

If she remained out too long in the evening air, he immediately ordered her off to her cabin.

If she dared go on deck early in the morning, the first person she saw was the fat man, who peremptorily told her to keep in her cabin till the sun was higher, or else to wrap up better.

If she ate less than usual, he would hastily march up to her, seize her most unceremoniously by the wrist, and in a loud tone count her pulse and order various medicines. Jane almost hated him then.

At other times he would read to her from his books—and he seemed to have an inexhaustible stock of them; or in that strangely familiar voice of his he would describe different foreign cities and remote places with a power and charm of manner altogether irresistible.

At such times she enjoyed his company very much, and though with a vague feeling of regret of the approaching time when a relentless fate would divide their paths, and she would continue on her strange and perilous journey alone.

Days passed. The vessel sailed steadily onward, and the captain declared that another thirty-six hours would bring them to their destination.

Jane sat on deck, watching the twilight gather over the restless waters.

The sun had set behind a pile of leaden clouds, and the wind was rising and sighed ominously through the tall spars.

A flock of screaming sea birds swept and circled round the ship, and she noted listlessly their low poise as they soared overhead.

The skies grew blacker and blacker, the waves ran high, and the white spray dashed angrily over the deck.

"You must go to your cabin, Miss Brent," said a quiet voice at her side. "We are going to have a storm, and this is no place for you."

The fat man was standing imperturbably near her, his hands crossed, and his eyes looking seaward.

"A storm!" she shuddered, with a sense of approaching danger, and drew her scarlet shawl more closely over her shoulders.

"Yes, a storm! and, if I am anything of a judge, it will be a severe one too."

Even as he spoke a sudden flash shot athwart the inky heavens, and a heavy peal of thunder came booming over the waters.

"You are right," she said, slowly. "I will go below."

She arose from her seat, but the rolling and pitching of the vessel were so great that she grasped the rail for support.

The fat man sprang to her assistance.

"Let me help you."

He almost carried her to her room, relinquishing her hand with a gentle but very perceptible pressure.

"The monster!" cried she as the door closed and the hot, indignant blood surged over her face and neck; "I will never speak to him again. I am vexed—nay, mad"—and she tried to make herself believe it was so.

But as the night came on, and the storm grew worse, she forgot her wrath in fears for the safety of the ship.

But the *Fire Fly* was a staunch boat and possessed a wise and brave commander.

Morning came, but with no signs of the storm's abatement.

Jane attempted to leave her room, but was unable to maintain an upright position for any length of time.

She was thinking what she should do for food, when there came a heavy rap on her room door. Wondering what was wanted, she managed to open it, and, swinging it back, looked out.

The fat man stood there, steadying himself as best he could, and holding in his hand a wicker basket and a small coffee can.

Jane, remembering the "hand-pressing" on the previous evening, was about to shut the door and keep him out, but he was not to be snubbed in so cavalier a manner.

"Good-morning, Miss Brent," he said, "I thought you would require breakfast, and so I have brought some. The storm is as bad as

ever, and no prospects of fair weather for some days, so the captain says, and you will be obliged to keep your room. However, I'll see that you don't starve."

She paused for a moment, but the coffee sent up a fragrant smell, and a delicious odour was emitted from the basket.

"I won't be too angry with him," thought she; "I'll take the breakfast and postpone my rage until after the food is swallowed. It's well enough to punish such presuming creatures as men are, but I don't feel inclined to starve myself to do it."

She reached out her hand and took the proffered food, thanking him with a bow.

The storm grew fiercer as the day progressed, and the captain of the ship looked troubled.

Suddenly the tall masts snapped like pipe stems and fell with a heavy crash into the sea.

"It is of no use," said he, "we shall sink."

He examined his chart and found they were miles away, gradually nearing the rocky shores of southern England, where there were shoals and sandbars, and sharp fanged crags jutting out into the sea, that the captain knew the gallant *Fire Fly* could not avoid. Doddworth stood beside him.

"What do you think of it?" asked he, in an anxious tone, as the captain drew a tremulous sigh.

"What do I think? I think that in an hour's time our bodies will have started on a downward course for the bottom of the ocean."

"There is no hope!"

"None."

Even as he spoke the shattered ship struck upon a submerged rock, reeling with the collision.

A great cry ran over the vessel, a cry that rose high and fearful above the roar of the storm,—

"The ship has struck and is on fire!"

CHAPTER VI.

INGERSOL received the lawyer's announcement with but seeming calmness. The heroes was on her way over—only a short interval remained between himself and the time when she would occupy Marshmellow Hall, and he be a penniless adventurer, preying upon society like a hungry shark after the blood of the ill-fated sailor.

From morning until night but one thought occupied his mind, and that was how to rid himself of Jane Brent.

The *Fire Fly* was now expected daily in port, and there was but one thing left him to do. He supplied himself with money, and, procuring a suit of dark, shabby-looking clothes, started for the coast.

He would hunt Jane Brent down—hunt her down to death. He would slay her, as he would a dog that stood in his path. Dykham should do it for him—Dykham, the great, burly ruffian who had served him many a time before, and who, with his ill-got gains, kept an inn of more than questionable repute on the coast.

Dykham would do anything for money, and he would pay him well.

It was night when he reached there, and a terrible storm that for two nights and a day had raged with undiminished fury was gradually dying away.

He found the innkeeper and his wife, with a host of others, down upon the beach, straining their eyes seaward, where a ship, securely held upon a reef some distance from the shore, was becoming wrapped in flames.

Over the seething foam of the waters the minute gun sent out a heavy, booming sound—a terrible appeal for succour in the hour of need; but there, in all that crowd of daring men, were none so reckless as to attempt to launch a boat and contend with the angry elements.

Again and again the gun sent up its wail of distress, and fishermen's wives in their pity went down upon their knees on the sands, praying for the unfortunate souls who were beyond all human aid or succour.

Suddenly a bright glare lit up the inky heavens, and a shriek of piercing agony rose high above the

roar of the sea. The ship became one sheet of fire, and the death-cry of a hundred souls was stifled for ever.

But in that one flash of fiery splendour the name of the ill-fated vessel had gleamed sharp and clear from the prow, and with an involuntary thrill Ingersol discovered it to be the "Fire Fly."

"She is dead now," said he. "I shall no longer need to fret myself on that point. She is out of my way, and the hundred thousand pounds are mine!"

He strolled exultantly up the beach. A party of fisherwomen were gathered round a dark, limp object on the ground. Ingersol went up to them, more out of idle curiosity than anything else, and asked what they were doing.

"It's a lady, sir, and she's coming to," was the reply, given in a whisper.

"A lady, eh?"

Ingersol pricked up his ears. What if after all the united efforts of fire and water, Jane Brent was still alive?

Signalling the innkeeper's wife, who was one of the company, he begged as an especial favour that the young woman should be taken speedily to her house, and he would see that she was well paid for her trouble.

Mrs. Dykham knew him instantly in spite of his shabby clothes.

"La me, Mr. Ernest, is that you? Of course if you're willing to foot the bill, I'll take the best of care of her."

With the assistance of the women she carried the dripping girl to the inn and laid her on a couch, where, ere long, she was restored to sensibility.

As they attempted to remove her heavy dress, they found tightly strapped around her waist, a firm elastic belt, to which was attached a brass-bound ebony box.

The instant Mrs. Dykham touched the box the girl raised herself up in bed, looking wildly round.

"You must not touch that!" she cried, in an agitated tone. "That box holds all my fortune, and must be left alone."

The eyes of the innkeeper's wife glittered greedily.

Gold was her idol—the object of her passionate adoration, and if the tiny casket contained a fortune, that fortune she would have by fair means or foul.

She went to her husband, who was conversing in a low tone with Ingersol.

Shortly afterwards Jane, who had now quite recovered, and her clothes having been dried, rejoined the others in the public room.

While there the door opened and a couple of men came in.

Their faces were pale and wan, and their clothes were completely saturated with water. They called for hot drinks and a couple of beds.

The girl started quickly as their voices sounded through the room, and she went slowly towards them, extending a hand to each.

Ingersol was watching her movements, and he strained his ears to catch the words she was saying.

"Is it possible, gentlemen, that I see you again? It is pleasant to know that I am not the only survivor of this terrible shipwreck."

The eyes of the two gentlemen brightened at the sight of her.

"Miss Brent!" cried the Captain, for it was he, shaking her hand warmly. "By Jove! I'm glad to hall you again this side of eternity."

"I am beginning to think I lead a charmed life, Captain Blane. I have thought several times that I had looked my last on earthly things, but only awoke to find myself still in the flesh."

She sat down by the glowing fire, her clear well-cut features sharply defined against the dark background, for, save the flickering rays on the hearth, there was no light in the room.

Ingersol stood back in the shadow, intently watching. The clear tones of Captain Blane, as he uttered her name had not failed to reach his ear, and his suspicions were now verified.

He was rapidly revolving in his mind what to do. There were now three to dispose of in place of the one—Captain Blane, his mate, and Jane Brent.

If Captain Blane and his comrade went on their

way unmolested, they would report to Adam Brownell that she survived the shipwreck and still lived.

It was a lonely inn on the coast, seldom frequented, and of those who had chanced to put up there very few had gone away.

No one knew of these three souls, save less than half a dozen fisherwomen, who would return to their homes now the storm was done, and never come again unless they were sent for.

It would be an easy thing to do.

He would give the innkeeper a magnificent sum of money for the one night's work, and then all his trouble would be over.

"Dykham Inn" could hold three more graves as well as the many who were already hidden in the damp cellars.

From his shadowed look-out Ingersol kept a sharp, vindictive watch on the trio before the blazing fire.

He listened for the low tones of the young lady, and, with a fiendish glee, thought of the rapidly approaching time when that calm voice would be for ever stilled, and the grave-worms fatten on the round and graceful form.

How he hated her as he watched the firelight playing over her pure, high-bred face.

He hated her for being the rightful owner of what he was determined to have for himself.

And she, all unconscious of the presence of her deadliest enemy, talked calmly on.

Finally the captain rose, glancing at the clock.

"I fear you must be weary, Miss Brent, and if the host will kindly show us to our room we will bid you a good-night," he said, with a parting clasp of the hand. "I am very tired myself, and think a good sleep will be beneficial to me."

Dykham stepped along towards the captain and lighting a spluttering candle, told him he was ready.

The two men followed him up the long flight of stairs and entered the room indicated. Drawing off their heavy boots they flung themselves down on the separate beds, and a few minutes later their deep, regular breathing showed them to be in a heavy slumber.

(To be continued.)

THE DOCTOR'S SECRET.

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CHAPTER XLIV.—(continued.)

"WHY, how do you do?" cried Mr. Brownlow, rising from his desk and greeting his friend heartily. "This is indeed an unexpected surprise. I hope you are come prepared to stay a fortnight at least."

As soon as he could bring himself to speak he explained to his friend that it was not pleasure, but business of the most important kind which connected him with that early morning call.

In a few words he explained the nature of it, together with his fears concerning the purport of the paper that Maria had been called upon to sign.

Mr. Brownlow's face grew grave as he listened.

"You have come too late," he said. "The mischief is already done."

The two lawyers looked into each other's faces.

"Let me know the truth," said Leonard, huskily. "In Heaven's name, keep nothing back!"

"The lady in question signed over everything she possessed—the real estate, personal property, every farthing that she had, to her husband."

"Then she is left a beggar," groaned Carson. "For to-day the villain has deserted her! Great Heavens!" he added in the next breath, "can nothing be done? Can the document not be set aside?"

The old lawyer shook his head.

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superfluous Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps, from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

"It was executed with her full consent."

"But it can be set aside as a fraudulent proceeding, because she did not know its contents when she signed it."

"You are mistaken," returned Mr. Brownlow. "I took particular pains to read the document to her."

"But she did not hear one word of it," declared Carson. "Her husband took good care that she should not."

"The fault in that instance is not mine, then," returned Brownlow. "At the time, I felt sorry for her, for I saw the man to whom she had made over everything that she had in this world was a rascal of no common order. Sit down; calm yourself, Carson," he added, his eyes following his friend, who was pacing nervously up and down the office.

"There is nothing to do but to look the inevitable in the face. What has been done cannot be undone."

The face which Leonard Carson turned to his friend was as white as death.

"If I had that fiend incarnate I would choke the miserable life out of him," he cried, clenching his hands.

"Poor fellow, he must have been a discarded suitor of the lady in question, he takes it to heart so," he thought. But he gave no vent to his thoughts in words.

"How can I go back to the hotel and tell her the truth?" cried Carson, smiting the table with his clenched fist.

"It will have to be done," said his friend. "It would be kinder to hear it to from your lips than from anyone else's."

"It will be an effort; but I have never yet shrunk from my duty. You are quite sure that the document read—all her property?"

"Yes, I am quite sure. Everything was specified."

"Then Heaven help her!" said Carson, huskily.

It was the hardest trial of his life to return to the hotel and face Maria with the intelligence he had for her. He would rather have faced a regiment of soldiers with drawn swords.

She was watching eagerly for his return. He never afterward remembered in what words he told her the dreadful truth. At first she did not understand the extent of the dreadful calamity, but little by little a realisation of the terrible truth dawned upon her, and she saw it all.

"Do you think he meant to take it from me—and then desert me?" she whispered.

He could not answer, he could only bow his head.

"What am I to do, Mr. Carson?" she whispered, creeping up closer to him, like a wounded doe might have done.

"Come back to your home and remain there until we investigate the matter more thoroughly. Perhaps he has had the grace to leave you something. He could not have been such a fiend as to take it all from you."

Ah, how white and wan she looked as she listened! His heart ached for her, but he dared not tell her so.

They took the next train for London. He sat opposite her in the carriage, but he did not attempt to break in upon her thoughts. He could only watch her with the deepest pity.

At last they reached the city. He placed Maria in a cab.

"Would you mind riding as far as my home with me?" she asked, clinging to his arm.

"Certainly not, if you wish it," he responded, taking a seat beside her.

They drove onward in silence, neither one of them breaking the ominous stillness. At last the little red-brick house was in sight; but Maria little dreamed of the surprise that was in store for her.

CHAPTER XLV.

As soon as they drove up to the kerbstones Maria saw that something was wrong within the house.

"Come with me," she said, still clinging to

Leonard Carson's arm. "Something is terribly wrong. I feel it."

They did not have to ring the bell, for the door stood ajar. They pushed it open and entered quickly. All was confusion in the little parlour. Maria could hear the old housekeeper's voice lamenting piteously.

"It's no use," came the answer, in the gruff voice of a man. "They're my orders; to clear the house of everyone, and everything in it. That's what I'm sheriff for."

Leonard Carson quickly entered the room.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked, sternly, seeing that Maria was unable to utter a word.

The man touched his hat as he recognised Carson.

"I have just received orders to see that this house is vacated," he said.

"Will you let me see who signed the order?" said Carson.

"The owner, sir," answered the man. "The property has just been purchased by that gentleman. He intends to tear it down without delay."

Gazing at the document, Carson saw a name signed to it that was unfamiliar to him.

"He purchased it of the owner, Mr. Augustus LeClerc?"

"There is no help for it," said Carson, humbly.

"And—am I to be turned out of here—turned out into the street?" sobbed Maria. "I could get a stay of proceedings, but it would only be for a day or two," moaned the unhappy woman. "I cannot leave my home—the home of my childhood—without a struggle."

"If you will step into another room, I will arrange with this gentleman," Carson said.

The old housekeeper tottered up to Maria, and threw her arms about her.

"Oh, Miss Maria—Miss Maria," she sobbed, "what can it mean! Surely you would not put us all out of the house!"

"I am put out as well," she answered, in surely the saddest voice that ever was heard. "You may as well know the truth, that which the whole world will know on the morrow; my—my—husband has left me, and he has taken all I have from me."

"Then I wouldn't remain under this roof a single hour," said the housekeeper, understanding the situation at once. "You need not fear. You can go to Dr. Forbes's house. That is where I was going. He was here a little while since—just when the sheriff came. Do you know what he did, Heaven bless him!" Without waiting for Maria's answer, she went on: "He called an ambulance for the poor old sick woman whom he has taken such an interest in, and had her removed to his own home, saying that I should not want for a home either; that I should come there and nurse her; and you would be welcome there, I know, Miss Maria, because he said, 'I am sure this action is not Maria's but the rashness of that dastardly husband she has married.' He took the old lady away," she added, "with as much care as though she had been the Queen of England. She has never regained consciousness of what has transpired about her. Likely enough she will die without ever speaking, or ever knowing how the young doctor has befriended her."

"Death is a welcome relief from all pain sometimes," said Maria.

"You had better go to Dr. Forbes's, my dear child," said the housekeeper, "and let them go on with whatever they have to do to-day."

"No; I will stay here until the last moment," she replied. "I was born in this house. The associations of a lifetime cling about its walls. Day by day I saw my mother and my father grow gray beneath this roof, and here they passed away. I often said that I would not leave it for a palace; that when I left it, they should carry me away, but it should be in silence; that the last scene upon which my eyes would close would be those which I had always loved best in life. No—no; I will not leave until the last moment."

"Do not talk about dying, Miss Maria!" said the old housekeeper. "I cannot bear it. Life is not yet ended for you. You are still young. Get a divorce from the rascal, and then

perhaps you may meet some good man and marry him."

"No," said Maria, shaking her head sadly. "Heaven does not grant divorces, even though man does. Only death can free me from the bonds which I have forged."

"You are foolish enough to still love that villain!" cried the housekeeper. "But that is your affair, not mine. If you would take my advice, I should say, don't do it!"

"Say no more!" said Maria; "I cannot bear it!"

Their conversation was interrupted by the lawyer who entered with the sheriff.

"I have arranged for a stay of proceedings for a week," he said. "During that time this gentleman will not molest you."

Maria bowed her head, and touching his hat, the sheriff, who was accustomed to such scenes, took a hasty departure.

"How can I ever thank you!" said Maria, her lip quivering.

"Do not attempt to do so," he said, earnestly. "Any little service I can render you will be a pleasure for me to attend to. During the week that intervenes I shall learn if there is anything left of your fortune. Rest easy in the meantime. If you want anything, call upon me. Will you promise to do this?" he asked, wistfully as he held out his hand.

Her lips moved. He knew she was too thoroughly overcome to answer; indeed, he expected none.

Her eyes followed him as he moved down the street.

"What a noble man he is!" she thought. But she never suspected his secret, or her life would have been different.

"He will find that there is nothing left of my fortune," she murmured. "For I did not think to tell him the pitiful truth—that even before we were wedded Gus Le Clercq influenced me to turn all my property into money and place it in different banks, all save this one house. He has drawn it from those banks long ere this."

This indeed proved the case. Within an hour after Le Clercq had left Maria at the hotel, he was on his way to the capital, reaching there by noon, and ere the closing time of the different banks he had succeeded in drawing from them, by right of the paper he held, the entire fortune of poor Maria.

"Great Scott! I was there ever such luck!" he cried, as he left the last bank. "Fortune favours the brave! I'll make a search for beautiful little Mona Tempest, find her and marry her. Maria will have secured a divorce by that time, and as they say in the novels 'I'll wed the girl of my choice, and be happy ever after.' It will take a fortune to bridge over dad's difficulties, but I'll have a fortune left for myself."

Although he had been paying attention to Maria Smithson, yet he had not lost sight of sweet Mona, up to the time she had engaged with the dressmaker, and he supposed she was with her yet.

Early the next morning he set about executing his plans.

He called upon Adam Maurice, and asked for Mona Tempest.

"She is not here," replied the loquacious French maid. "Indeed, she has not been here for several weeks."

"Can you tell me where she has gone?" he asked, slipping a bank-note in her hand.

The girl looked hastily over her shoulder to see that no one was about.

"It would lose me my place if I were to tell you," she said. "Madame warned us all to say nothing to anyone who might inquire."

"I give you my word that I shall say nothing to anyone about it."

"I depend upon you, sir. There is something in your face which tells me you can be trusted."

Gus laughed ironically, thinking how wide of the mark she was in her estimation of himself.

"Make haste, my good girl," he said; "some one is coming. Tell me now, where is Mona Tempest?"

"She and her little sister are in the workhouse," was the startling reply.

"You are telling me a falsehood!" he cried, savagely.

"It is the truth, monsieur, I assure you," answered the girl. "You see, Madame Maurice has cousins, or relatives of some kind, there—at the workhouse, I mean—and she thought it would be easier to send the girl and her sick little sister there than to tramp round and find some other place for them."

He had no time to question the girl further, as there was the sound of steps in the corridor above.

Beating a hasty retreat, he entered his carriage, and was driven rapidly down the street.

She evidently had no money, or she would not have suffered herself to be taken to the workhouse; but then, if the little one was ill, I suppose she had no choice in the matter. I will renew my protestations of love. I will do so well by her little sister that I will win Mona's heart in that way, for money can accomplish anything. The engagement shall only last until I find that I am free, then within an hour's time I will wed the lovely Mona Tempest."

He drove out on the road to the workhouse as near as he dared; then, leaving the vehicle at the nearest corner, and ordering the driver to wait for him, he went on foot the rest of his way.

He smiled grimly to himself as he thought what a constant visitor he had been at that institution but a little while before, when he was trying so hard to win the great heiress and her thousands. He knew that the officials would have a warm welcome for him, for he had spent money lavishly to make them speak well of him to the heiress. He felt quite certain that they knew nothing of his marriage to Maria Smithson, for he had kept that a profound secret. He would make a bold stroke for love's sake. Walking boldly up the broad stone steps, he rang the bell imperiously, and of the attendant who answered, he asked for Mona Tempest.

CHAPTER XLVI.

AUGUSTUS LECLERCQ impatiently paced up and down the reception-room, with a strange, sinister smile on his face. He was wondering how Mona would greet him. He had taken special pains not to let her know who wished to see her.

Many long, weary days had elapsed since Mrs. Moore had gone out on that fatal mission, and Mona told herself that the poor old soul must have perished in the storm.

Little Minna had not died, and it seemed to her sister that she was saved by almost a miracle. Mona came quickly into the room. She had expected to find Dr. Forbes awaiting her. Her amusement can be better imagined than described when she saw who her visitor was.

The look of abject delight on her face told LeClercq the abhorrence in which he was held.

"You!" she exclaimed, scarcely believing the evidence of her own eyes. "May I ask what brings you here, sir—why you wish to see me?"

"Sit down, Miss Tempest," he said, summoning his blindest smile. "I see you have not been able to forget the unfortunate little incident that occurred that night in your home. I have never had the opportunity to fully explain—"

Mona cut him short with a wave of her hand.

"Your explanation and apology comes at a very late date, sir."

"That is because I was so very unfortunate as to lose track of you, and I was unable to find you. It has weighed upon my soul ever since, has darkened the sunshine of my life. I had been indulging in wine that night. I have only the dimmest recollection of what occurred to offend you. I swear this to you! Let me make any amends in my power, to prove to you that I am worthy of your friendship, instead of your enmity. I hear that your dear little sister is very ill. I have come to render you any assistance in my power. I offer to do for little Minna all that money can accomplish, if you will only let me. For her sake, I beg of you, do not refuse my proffered aid, Miss Tempest. It may

be the means of saving her life. There is nothing in this world I would not do to help your sister, for your sake. Remember, her very life may be at stake, and you have it in your power to save her. Can you let prejudice stand in the way?"

He saw the girl's lips tremble and her eyes fill with tears. Before she had time to answer, he continued:

"I have a beautiful country-place, not far from town. My aunt, an old lady, is living there alone. She wants a companion, to whom she is willing to pay a good salary. I said to myself that, if I could find you, I would offer you the position. You could take your little sister there with you, and you could live a charmed life. You see, I am not such a bad fellow, after all," he added, with a little laugh.

The mission upon which he had apparently come threw Mona off her guard. Perhaps, after all, she had misjudged him.

"Mr. LeClercq, you have my deepest gratitude," she said, in great agitation. "I—I will accept the position, if your aunt will take me, for my little sister's sake."

"You have decided very wisely," said Gus LeClercq as he rose to go. "I will give you my aunt's address, and you may call on her at your earliest opportunity. When will it suit you to see Mrs. Lawson?"

"To-morrow—to-day—any time," returned Mona, eagerly.

"I cannot get word to her before to-morrow. I do not see my aunt very often. I have no business to take me there only occasionally."

Mona was secretly glad to hear this, as he knew she would be.

"To-morrow, then, I will be ready to go to her," said Mona.

"If I should not see you again, always remember that I wish you well," he added, holding out his hand.

This also was a remark calculated to deceive her, for he had made up his mind that he should see a great deal of Mona after she entered the employ of Mrs. Lawson.

"You will find her a trifle eccentric," he added, as he turned toward the door; "but you must not mind that."

"Indeed I shall not, sir," said Mona, earnestly. "I will do everything in my power to make my services of value to her, believe me."

"I am sure you will succeed," he declared. "Farewell, Miss Tempest," he said, bowing low. "Good-bye, sir," returned Mona.

A moment more, and he was gone. Mona stood looking after him with the most bewildering expression on her face.

"I could almost believe I had been dreaming. He says he had been drinking wine that night, which I have never yet succeeded in getting out of my mind. Perhaps this is true. If so, I have done him a cruel injustice, as he says."

His visit had been very opportune. The superintendent of the institution had informed her that as soon as her little sister was able to be about, it would be advisable for her to look around and find something to do.

His visit had been a blessing, for work was scarce and help was plentiful at that season of the year. She had been troubled as to where she should find a place and keep Minna with her. She had almost feared that she would have to leave the child at the workhouse for a little while until she could find such a place.

There was quite a commotion at the workhouse the following afternoon when a carriage stopped there and Mona Tempest rode away in it. Minna clung to her with terrified eyes.

"Do not cry, my darling," she said. "I am going to see if I can make arrangements for a nice home to take you to. We shall leave this place then for ever."

"You will not be long, Mona!" she said, eagerly.

"No," answered the girl, unclasping the child's clinging arms from about her neck; "not longer than I can help. But why do you look so terrified?"

"Because of the dream I had last night. I thought you left me to go somewhere, Mona, and—and—I never saw you again."

Mona only laughed at the child's fears, and kissed away her tears.

"You mustn't dream anything so naughty," she said. "Be a good child, and I will be back very soon."

She waved her hand to little Minna, as, looking up, she saw the child's face pressed wistfully to the window-pane. The little girl watched the vehicle until a turn in the road hid it from sight; then she crept back to her little bed with a sigh on her lips, for Minna was still very weak.

Meanwhile, the carriage drove rapidly away toward its destination. Mona was not well enough used to carriages to understand that this was only an ordinary cab, and that the cabman was not a private driver.

The vehicle stopped at length before a small, picturesque stone cottage set like a bird's nest in a group of dark fir-trees, while shadowy firs and stately elms stood like grim sentinels in the rear of the place as far as her eyes could reach.

The place would look pretty and picturesque enough in summer, she thought, but draped as it was in a shroud of cold snow, it presented a very gloomy aspect.

"Shall I wait for you, miss?" inquired the driver, as she descended from the cab.

"I do not know," said Mona, in bewilderment.

"Did your mistress not tell you whether you were to take me back or not?"

"Oh, yes," exclaimed the man, hastily; "I am to wait for you. I had quite forgotten it."

Mona walked timidly up the gravelled path which led to the door.

A frowny-headed serving-maid answered the summons.

"Can I see Mrs. Lawson?" asked Mona, hesitatingly.

"I don't know," said the girl. "She is in a terrible temper just now!"

"But she sent for me," said Mona.

"Aha! no doubt she wishes you to take my place," said the girl, suspiciously. "Well, I can say this much, I don't care a rap, anyhow, for I don't like the place."

"I only came here yesterday, and I don't care how soon I get away. The place looks to me more like one of those ready-furnished cottages than a rich woman's house. She's just as bad as her surroundings. I don't believe she's had help before; at least, she isn't like any lady that I've ever worked for."

"Jemima! Jemima!" cried a shrill voice from over the banister of the floor above, "your starch is boiling over! Get at your clothes, or you won't have them out to-day! Laws-a-massy! I never saw such a slow girl. Who're you gasin' with? I told you I didn't want a girl who would go around talking to the neighbours. Come in here this minute!"

"There's a young girl here who wants to see you," replied Jemima.

"Oh, yes! I guess I know who it is! Fetch her in, and sit her down in the parlour. I'll see her at once. I told you we'd have company before you got that washing out!"

Quite bewildered by this dialogue, Mona followed the girl in to the house, with strange misgivings at her heart lest she should never be able to please the owner of the querulous voice.

She had little opportunity to observe the furnishings of the room, for a moment later a very fat, florid-faced woman waddled into the room.

"How do you do! How are you!" she said, shaking hands so warmly with Mona, that the grip of her fingers made Mona's hand ache for hours afterward. "I am glad to see you, I am sure. Do take off your things."

"She mistakes me for some visitor she is expecting," thought Mona, much embarrassed.

"I am Mona Tempest," she said.

"Just so! Just so!" replied the woman, her face beaming with smiles. "I've been waiting for you. I guess we'll get along all right. You seem like a good-natured little thing!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

"I HAVE never been engaged as companion by anyone before," said Mona, earnestly; "but I will do my best to please you, and will work for

whatever you consider may be right, so long as I can have my little sister with me."

"Got a little sister, hey?"

"Did you not know that?" asked Mona, her heart sinking.

"Oh, yes; yes, yes! I had quite forgotten," said Mrs. Lawson. "I never cared much about young ones after my little one grew up and ran off with the fish-pedlar across the way; still, we may be able to get along with her, somehow."

"She will be no trouble, I assure you," said Mona. "She is a very quiet, unobtrusive little girl."

"I dare say we can put up with her," said Mrs. Lawson; adding: "Mr. LeClercq—my nephew, I mean—says that it's in the bargain for me to have the little girl here. When can you come?"

"At any time," said Mona. "To-day, if you wish."

"The sooner, the better," said Mrs. Lawson. "Would you think it bold of me to ask you what remuneration you mean to give?" inquired Mona, timidly.

Mrs. Lawson stared at her for a moment, and then turned away without answering; but Mona felt that she must know this important item.

"Would you mind telling me?" she asked, after an awkward pause of a moment or two.

"See here, young woman," said Mrs. Lawson. "I don't want you to be flashing off any of your big words on me, to show off your learning."

Mona was greatly taken aback at this.

"I was not aware that I had done so," she faltered. "I simply wanted to know how much you thought my services were worth—what you wished to pay me."

"I know very well what you thought. I understand all the big words, even if I don't use 'em; but I don't want you to be talkin' 'em to me, it isn't polite."

Mona could not help but smile in spite of herself, this lady was so strange. It was then that the knowledge dawned upon her that this rich Mrs. Lawson was not so well educated as she might be.

She hardly knew what reply to make to this remark. She rose timidly to take her departure.

"Well, I declare, if there isn't that carriage waiting there yet. I suppose it's to take you back and return with you again."

"Oh, madam, you are altogether too kind," said Mona. "For myself, I could easily walk this distance. I appreciate your thoughtfulness for little Minna, as she is still weak."

All the way back Mona was thinking deeply what a strange lady Mrs. Lawson was.

When little Minna saw her she was not impressed with her any more favourably than Mona had been.

"Is she a rich lady?" whispered the little girl, when she found herself alone with her sister.

"Yes, she must be," said Mona, thoughtfully.

"I am sure you have made a mistake," persisted the child. "She must be one of the servants. Didn't you see how afraid she was to sit on one of the nice chairs?"

"Hush!" said Mona. "You must speak and think well of her; she is a very good lady to have you here."

"What have you got to do? Mona!"

"I don't know yet," returned the girl. "No, doubt she will instruct me in regard to my duties as soon as we get settled here."

During the first week the child watched Mrs. Lawson with wide-open eyes.

"Are you quite sure she is a real lady?" she asked dabbly, when they were alone. "Didn't you see how she sat with her knife?—even the pen, and they were so big and so round that they ran off the edge of it all the time."

"You should not have been looking at such things," said Mona, distressed that the child should have been so observant.

"Didn't you always tell me to watch and see how other ladies eat?" demanded the child. "What could she say to this?"

After luncheon, Mrs. Lawson called Mona to her room.

"Now you are to begin your duties," she remarked, pompously.

"Yes, madam," said Mona.

"Well, why don't you begin!" said Mrs. Lawson, looking at her.

"I shall be very pleased to do so when you tell me them," said the girl.

"I thought you knew just what you had to do," echoed Mrs. Lawson, in astonishment. "Why, what do you suppose a woman wants a girl for, except to wash and iron, cook and bake, and sew, and keep the house tidy? Goodness me! there isn't enough for two of you girls to do!"

Mona was looking aghast at her.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Lawson," she gasped. "Forgive me for misunderstanding you, I came here to be a companion, not—a—servant girl."

"Well, ain't that a companion?" persisted Mrs. Lawson. "You and Jemima can be companions. You can both go about together on your days out."

"No, madam," said Mona, with a quiver in her voice. "The services of a companion are quite different."

"Well, let's hear what they are," said Mrs. Lawson, turning very red in the face.

"A lady's companion waits upon her mistress only," said Mona. "She brushes her hair, looks after her wardrobe, reads to her, drives with her, and walks with her."

"I was just joking about the other," said Mrs. Lawson, in some confusion. "I wanted to see if you knew your business, but I see you do. That's what I want you to do—read to me, and drive with me, talk to me and dance with me. But I shall have to get some clothes to wear before we can do all that. Go on with what you consider to be the correct thing, Miss Tempest. I'll see how you get along, or, rather, my nephew will."

Mona's first day at the Lawson cottage was full of vexations. Mrs. Lawson did not like the way she did up her hair, and when it came to reading to her, she encountered her first great trial.

"I haven't any books or papers here," she said to Mona. "I—I have just moved in, you know. Supposing you run down to the booksellers and get something yourself! you know best what will be interesting."

Mona put on her hat and cloak, and hastened away on her errand. When she reached the bookseller's, she remembered that she had not asked Mrs. Lawson what kind of books she wished, and the girl was therefore rather puzzled to select something suitable from the array that filled the counters.

She purchased at length one of the late magazines devoted to history, a religious novel, and a weekly paper which contained the general news of the place.

"I think that will do," she said, handing them to the obliging clerk to be wrapped up.

It was dusk when she reached the cottage. After the dinner was over, with which Mrs. Lawson found ever so much fault, and the lights were lighted in her apartment, Mona opened the package and displayed her purchases.

"A novel, and a magazine, and a newspaper," said Mrs. Lawson, looking from one to the other. "The *Cosmopolitan Magazine*? Humph! I never heard of it before."

She tossed this aside, and picked up the novel. "His Christian Wife," she read aloud, in a decidedly disgusted tone of voice. "Great Scott! you must have been crazy to think I'd like anything like that. Why didn't you get a book with a title like 'His Runaway Wife,' 'The Woman Who Loved Another,' 'Too Much of a Sinner'! Those are all titles I see advertised. I want thrice kind—something like that suits my taste. Good Heavens! look at the paper! Now, wouldn't it have been as easy for you to have picked out the *Sporting News*, or something of that kind! Bah! With your goody-goody notions, you don't know what's spicy, I should say. Hold on; I'll make a list for you. Tell those people they'll have to exchange 'em."

Mona did as she was bid, and the young clerk, who waited on her, was greatly surprised at the selection which the sweet-faced young girl made the second time. He could not help but think of it after she had left the shop.

He turned abruptly, and looked after the slim, retreating girl who was just disappearing from view, with her bundle of books in her arms, her head bent thoughtfully down.

Mona Tempest drooped her eyes in ill-concealed mortification over the books, which she laid upon Mrs. Lawson's table.

She had already glanced through them hurriedly, and had found in each some things that amused, several pages that startled, and several other chapters that profoundly puzzled her innocent mind. Try hard as she did to conquer the feeling Mona's opinion of Mrs. Lawson was not a little lowered after that.

She had not got very far with the French novel, when she stopped abruptly.

"I—I do not like to read the next sentence to you, Mrs. Lawson," she said. "I am sure you would not like it."

"What's the reason I wouldn't?"

"It does not sound quite polite," said Mona, blushing furiously.

"Go ahead," said Mrs. Lawson. "It won't shock me, if that's what you mean. I'm no prude."

Mona struggled bravely half through the sentence; then she stopped short, her colour coming and going piteously.

"Please don't ask me to read it, Mrs. Lawson," she said, faintly.

"Don't be a fool, Miss Tempest; you're just at the most interesting part."

"But I am sure it isn't proper."

"What nonsense go right ahead. I'm the best judge of that."

But Mona still stopped short. Nothing could induce her to read any further.

"Here! hand me the book!" cried Mrs. Lawson, snatching it from the girl's hand.

Mona felt that her discharge would follow the next moment; but for all that, she could not bring herself to read the sentence from which her whole soul revolted. By the greatest effort she kept the tears back from her eyes.

"I cannot see what a devil-may-care fellow like LeClercq wants with a fool like that," thought Mrs. Lawson. "Ah! here he is now!"

(To be continued.)

CHERRY'S MISTAKE.

—30—

"WHERE'S Cherry? Cherry will have to pick the strawberries for lunch."

"Where is she, indeed? I'm sure I don't know now, but she's been crying in the corner all the morning because papa has discharged old Mackenzie."

And Miss Charlotte dusted plaques and shook up cushions vigorously.

So provoking to have the housemaid ill, and young Frank Waters coming to Westdale! Just now, too, she regretted the absence of old Mackenzie, who had been Squire Marston's gardener and man-of-all-work for fifteen years; he was so good-natured and accommodating in an emergency—would turn his hand to anything, and put everybody in good humour with his drolery.

But Mac was growing old, and the Squire needed a younger man on the place. Old Mac would remain only to instruct Tom Hall in his duties, and foolish Cherry, the younger sister, was crying because her old friend and comrade was going away from Westdale.

"Well, she must pick the strawberries," said Ethel, the beauty. "There is no one else. I'm sure I can't go out in the hot sun with my complexion, and I've only time to dress and do my hair before Mr. Waters gets here. Is there plenty of jelly for the cold chicken? And did you make the macaroons, Lottie?"

"Don't you worry about my part," said Lottie, flourishing her feather-duster. "See that you do yours as well," with a significant look.

Ten minutes afterwards a young girl walked rapidly down the garden-path with a tin-pail in her hand.

It was eleven o'clock, and a fervid heat was pouring down on her pretty hat.

"Excused from my lessons to pick strawberries for Ethel's bear, under such a sun as this! I'd quite as lief be reading French with Miss Stanton in the school-room. So much for being the youngest! Why can't Ethel pick her own strawberries, I'd like to know? Oh, dear! I don't mean to be cross, but everything goes wrong lately. Dear old Mac, who taught me to walk, and who has always made me swings, and fixed my garden-beds, and cheered me up when I was in trouble—he must be sent off for hateful old Tom Hall! I know he's young, but I shall call him old! And now this other strange man—Ethel's beau—will be here, and I'm told to 'keep out of the way,' and Miss Stanton and I must skulk away to the school-room, while he and Ethel take up the whole of the house! I suppose he's nice, though. I should like to see him! My! how fine the strawberries are!"

Cherry had reached the strawberry-bed, which lay unsheltered by bush or tree, its great, crimson berries ripening sweetly in the glowing heat.

Pushing back her hat, she knelt down among them.

The tendrils of her chestnut hair clung moist about her young forehead. Her cheeks were flushed by the great warmth; her round lips red as the beautiful fruit over which she bent.

She worked with energy for awhile, but at last paused and surveyed her pail, which was but a third full.

"Oh! dear, what slow work! and how hot it is! I shall never get the pail full!"

She took off her straw hat and fanned her red cheeks.

Just then she espied a young man lying under a tree near the roadside.

"There's that old Tom Hall now!—and I'm going to set him to work. Come here!" she called, authoritatively.

The young man rose quickly from the green grass and approached the imperious young lady.

"You may help me pick these strawberries. You will have to work if you come here, I can tell you!"

The young man bowed, and went down obediently upon his knees in the strawberry-bed.

"Papa don't allow any shirking! You can't dress like that here, either!" added Miss Cherry, surveying the attire of the new gardener, which

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seemed to be of too good a cut and fine quality for a person in Tom's Hall's station of life.

"Indeed!"

"No! Old Mac was in his shirt-sleeves and overalls, early and late, ever since I can remember. He's been with us sixteen years, ever since I was a baby, and he's been faithful!" said Cherry, with some very like a sob in her voice. "Do you know anything about gardening?"

"Something!"

"Well, you'll have to know everything! Papa is very particular, especially about his young trees. He'll be sorry for sending Mac off—see if he isn't!" concluded Cherry, talking to herself, as she wandered to the other side of the bed.

What else Tom Hall might fail in, he could pick strawberries very rapidly and nicely, and surveying the fast-filling pail, Miss Cherry condescended to be more gracious.

"Thank you! I'll let you finish; you get along so nicely. Perhaps you will please papa. I think very likely," she added, with a sigh.

Retreating a short distance to the shade of an apple-tree, she fanned herself with her hat, and surveyed the prospect.

Tom Hall, looking toward the apple-tree, saw a patch of *lapis lazuli* sky, boughs of emerald hung with pale green spheres, and beneath them a graceful, weary little figure, in a dress of grey cambric, with abundant chestnut hair shading a pretty face.

In a few minutes he came up with the pail.

"Have you done?" asked Cherry, arousing herself. "Oh, dear! I'm so glad that's finished! I don't often have such disagreeable tasks to do," she continues, more confidentially; "but my sister is expecting company—a gentleman from town—and she's very particular to have a nice lunch. Ethel wouldn't burn her complexion, though, if Frank Waters never had a strawberry in his life!" she added, more to herself. "And I hope he won't want any more while he stays here, if I have to pick them! Heigh-ho! You'd better not let papa see you lying on the grass; you might not make a very good impression on him," she said, as she nodded good-bye, and started for the house.

For her companion, looking quite warm, and with moist curls of dark hair twining almost as tightly as her own about the forehead, retreated to the roadside tree and threw himself down again, good-humouredly smiling, and apparently not in the least offended by the candour of this frank young lady.

"I don't believe he'll suit pa!" she soliloquized. "He's too nice; he'll never get right down to hard work like poor Mac. He did pick the strawberries nicely, though. Glad I met him."

And Cherry entered the house, and gladly delivered up her fragrant burden.

"You and Miss Stanton had better take your lunch in the schoolroom; then you needn't dress."

"Lottie," cried Cherry, "can't I even see him?"

"I'm willing, but Ethel says—"

"I don't care what Ethel says! I shall come down. Can't I, papa? can't I have lunch with you?"

"Certainly, certainly! You will do; you look very well," answered the Squire, with whom Cherry was a favourite.

And so, when Cherry had hurriedly bathed her forehead and hands in cool water, and braided and tied with a fresh ribbon her abundant chestnut hair, she came quietly into the dining-room a little later; but her father called her cheerfully to a place beside him.

"My youngest daughter, Cherry, Mr. Waters."

A frank, pleasant face, with dark hair curling tightly about a broad, white forehead, and a very good natured smile. Cherry lifted her broad lids, and gave a little gasp.

"The young lady and I have already met. Let me give you some of the strawberries, Miss Cherry. They are very nice."

And so as the meal was quite without formality, "Tom Hall" heaped Cherry's saucer with strawberries, and began talking to her in the most charming manner. But poor Cherry, from turning scarlet to the tips of her fingers,

turned so pitifully white, realizing her dreadful mistake, that it was almost evident that the meal was almost a blank to her.

She got away as soon as she could, ran down into the garden, crept under a syringa-bush and cried.

Pretty soon Mr. Waters was on his knees beside her.

"Pray—pray don't take your little mistake so much to heart! It did no harm, and I was very much amused."

"You—you are very good!" sobbed Cherry, "but I never can get over it; and Ethel will never forgive me when she knows—"

"Then we won't tell her," said Frank, cheerfully, and Cherry was sure, then, that he was nice. "It is our secret. Only when I say 'strawberries' you are to be very, very good to me."

So he won the child out of her tears and fears, and leading her down the elm-shaded paths, fanned her with a huge leaf, and chatting charmingly, made her smile till her tears were dried.

"Why, Cherry, child, where did you see Mr. Waters before?" asked Ethel, coming up and looking a little peculiar.

"Oh, just by the roadside yonder," answered Frank, so carelessly, that Ethel thought nothing more of the matter.

But she observed that he was very attentive to Cherry, and she continued to observe it during the three days of the gentleman's stay.

And that was not all, for Frank Waters came again and again to Westdale during the summer, and when Cherry's seventeenth birthday came, made a formal proposal for her hand which was shyly accepted, and now they are happy as the day is long, all through CHERRY'S MISTAKE.

BOOKS FOR THE LITTLE ONES.—Messrs. Dean and Son, 160A, Fleet Street, E.C., have a well-established reputation as the publishers of Toy Books that no child can see without expressing a desire to possess. The variety is almost endless, so we advise those of our readers who are purchasing presents for the little ones to make a point of inquiring for and examining the various series of toy books issued by this firm, as they will be sure to find something to please. A novelty is what is known as the "Cracker" series, being books cut to the shape of a Japanese fan and a hatchet, and fitted with a wooden handle. The artistic painting book is really wonderful value for a shilling, and their toy books, mounted on linen, and published at the same price, are bargains in their way.

DROPS OF SCENT WORTH THEIR WEIGHT IN GOLD.—In a recent article which appeared in a weekly periodical it was erroneously stated that Messrs. Blondeau, the manufacturers of the well-known Vinolia Soap, consume 1,000 ounces of otto of roses every year. Considering that otto of roses is more than worth its weight in gold, probably some readers thought that the writer was romancing. As a matter of fact, however, his statement fell far below the truth; as a representative of the journal in question discovered the other day when he paid a visit to the famous Vinolia factory. Roughly speaking, this firm's yearly consumption of this golden fluid is about 5,000 ounces! The precious liquid has a strong-room all to itself, wherein it reclines in curious-looking flat flagons swathed in flannel. These flagons are undoubtedly the most valuable in the world. Although less than twelve inches long and only about six inches in diameter, each of them contains £180 worth of liquid! The same sized flagons, if filled with wine of the rarest and most costly vintage, would not be worth one-tenth of their present value.

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FACETIE

If I were in the sun and you out of it, what would the sun become? Sin.

PROSPECTIVE SUITOR: "Sir, I love your daughter." Her Father: "Well, don't come to me with your troubles."

DOCTOR: "Now, what did your father and mother die of?" Applicant: "Well, sir, I can't say as I do 'xactly remember; but 'twasn't nothing serious."

NANCY: "Jack Morton proposes in this letter. I wonder if he really loves me; he has only known me a week." The Brother: "Oh, then, perhaps he does."

LITTLE BROTHER (bedtime): "Why don't you take your stockings off?" Little Sister (whose mother buys the cheap black kind): "I'd dot all of 'em off 'at will come off."

"LITTLE Johnny opened his drum yesterday to find where the noise came from?" "Did he find out?" "Yes, when his father came home. The noise came from little Johnny."

A DANDY, wishing to be witty, accosted an old regman as follows: "You take all sorts of rubbish in your cart, don't you?" "Yes, jump in! jump in!" said the man.

"Now, my dear, you must admit that Mrs. Watts looked exceedingly well in her new gown," said Mr. Wickwire. "Y-e-s, the gown did look very well on her."

BYSTANDER: "Doctor, what do you think of his injuries?" Doctor: "Humph! Two of them are undoubtedly fatal; but as for the rest of them, time alone can tell."

"DIDN'T I see you playing pitch-halfpenny with that little Bilkins boy?" "Yes, mother." "Well, don't do it again. Do you hear me?" "Yes, mother. I won't do it no more. He hasn't got another halfpenny left."

HE: "So you visited Pompeii?" She: "Oh, yes." "How did you like it?" "Well, I must say I was dreadfully disappointed in the place. Of course it was beautifully located, and all that, but it was dreadfully out of repair."

ALICE: "Miss Swift is learning to ride a bicycle, she tells me." Rather: "But she rode one last year. Why does she have to learn again?" Alice: "Another fellow is teaching her."

AUNT: "Why, what are you doing?" Little Johnny: "Only prayin'." "Praying?" "Yes. I'm prayin' that I'll be a good boy this afternoon." "That's noble." "Yes. Mamma said if I was a good boy this afternoon she'd bring me some sweets."

"JOHNNY, here you are at breakfast with your face unwashed!" "I know it, mamma. I saw the little things that live in water through papa's microscope last evening, and I'm not going to have them crawlin' over my face with their funny little legs!"

POLICEMAN: "This is the feller, yer Honour, as stole them shoes from Finnegan's." Justice: "Were the shoes in his possession?" "No, sor-r." "What's the evidence, then?" "Whin I rin down the strate cryin' 'Stop thafe!' he stopped at wanst, an' looked back."

"PRETTY cold weather, isn't it, Bobbie?" said Mrs. Stimson. "Yes, but you don't feel it half so much as you will next winter," said Bobbie Bingo. "What makes you think so?" "'Cause mamma says your sealskin cloak can't possibly last another year."

A FAVOURITE little golf story comes from Scotland. "I shall hae to gie it up," remorsefully remarked the Scotch minister, who had no language when his ball lay buried in a bunker. "What, golf?" asked his friend and caddy. "Na," returned the other; "the ministry."

A PUEL TEACHER from the board school at H., under examination in religious knowledge, was asked, "Can you explain the apparent discrepancies between Saint Stephen's speech and the Old Testament history?" Pause, puzzled look, then triumphant reply, "He used the Revised Version."

An old woman in one of the Dublin streets hailed a passing tram, and, when it had stopped for her, she turned to a labouring man who was repairing the road, and asked if he knew "Where this tram would leave her?" "Begorra, ma'am!" says he, "I'm thinking it'll lave ye where ye are if ye don't hurry on." And so it did, for when she turned round the tram was gone.

A GENTLEMAN was assisting at a bazaar last winter by reciting now and again during the evening. He had recited once or twice; and the people were sitting about chaffing, when he heard one of the committee go up to the chairman and whisper, "Haudn't Mr. — better give us another recitation now!" Whereupon the chairman replied, "No, not yet; let them enjoy themselves a bit longer."

SOME time ago, in a small Cornish village, the stewards of a chapel decided upon building a new one, and convened a meeting to further discuss its erection. At the meeting it was proposed and carried unanimously—(1) That the new chapel should be built on the site where the old chapel was standing; (2) That if any materials in the old fabric could be utilised they should be used in the construction of the new chapel; (3) That the old chapel should not be demolished till the new building was completed.

WHEN a beginner, in the medical profession, a doctor, had occasion to attend a trial as a witness, counsel, in cross-examining the young M.D., made several sarcastic remarks doubting the ability of so young a man to understand his business. "Do you know the symptoms of concussion of the brain?" asked the learned counsel. "I do," replied the doctor. "Well," continued the attorney, "suppose my learned friend, Mr. Bagwig, and myself were to bang our heads together, should we get concussion of the brain?" "Your learned friend, Mr. Bagwig, might," said the doctor, quietly.

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From W. J. WARE, Esq., Nunhead, London.—"Having a very sensitive skin, much affected by cold winds, it made me a victim to great suffering, although having tried numerous remedies. A friend insisted on my trying your Carbolic Ointment, and gave me proof of its efficacy. I applied it also for a very bad burn on my hand, which, after a few applications, it entirely relieved; and, having used it beneficially for other purposes, I can only describe it as a Miraculous Ointment."

W. C. FITZGERALD, Chemist, Wellington, New Zealand, writes: "It is, without exception, the best healing Ointment I ever used."

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SOCIETY.

PRINCESS "CHARLES" OF DENMARK in her new home will never be addressed or styled either Princess "Charles" or "Carl," but Princess Maud, as it is not the custom in Scandinavia for the wife to assume the Christian name of her husband on her marriage.

THE main difference between the crown of the Prince of Wales and the crowns of the other Princes of the Royal Family is in the fact that the latter have neither diadem, ball, nor cross; the golden circlets are lavishly set with jewels, and bear four crosses and four fleur-de-lis alternating. The crowns of the Princesses Royal of Great Britain are like those worn by the Princes.

ALTHOUGH the little boys who have recently been born to Princess Frederick Charles of Hesse bring the number of the Queen's great-grandchildren up to twenty-seven, and her Majesty has likewise been presented with no less than thirty-eight grandchildren, this is the first occasion that twins have made their appearance in the Royal family, and the Queen is therefore even more than usually interested in the little lads. The Empress Frederick, too, is exceedingly proud of the babies, who have one little brother about a year and a half their senior.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales will spend most of the second and third weeks in December at Marlborough House, and on Saturday the 12th they are going to Windsor Castle on a visit to the Queen, returning to town on the following Monday, after attending the annual memorial service in the Prince Consort's Mausoleum at Frogmore. There will be a third shooting party at Sandringham from Monday, December 28th, until Saturday, January 2nd.

It is said that white boots are to form quite a distinctive feature in the fashionable get-up of the smart folk who make the Riviera their headquarters during the winter months. They are made in great variety and are very *chic*, but will not, we fear, contribute to the dainty look of the foot as black or tan ones do, white or light colours having a decided tendency to increase rather than diminish the size of the foot. It is useless, however, to argue this point, for we all know how it is with a great many—they would as soon be out of the world as out of the fashion.

It is not generally known that the left hand of the Queen of Denmark is withered and incapable of holding anything. This was caused by a tiger pup, which was a great pet of the Queen in her youth. Playing one day with the animal in the park the Princess was bitten in the hand by the cub in a fearful manner, although only in play. The Princess, notwithstanding the extreme pain she was suffering, preserved her presence of mind, and led the cub peremptorily to the stables where it was shot. Two small bones of the hand were totally crushed, and all surgical skill failed in preserving the use of the member.

THE Queen is to leave Windsor for Osborne either on Friday, December the 18th, or on Tuesday the 22nd, and her Majesty will reside in the Isle of Wight until the middle of February, when she is to return to Windsor for a stay of about three weeks before going to the Riviera. There will be a small family party at Osborne during the Christmas holidays, consisting of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught and their children, Princess Louise and Lord Lorne, and the Duchess of Albany and her children.

EARLY in the New Year Prince and Princess Charles of Denmark will leave England for their Danish home. A large and different suite of rooms in the Royal Palace at Copenhagen have now been placed at the disposal of the young couple by their uncle, the King of the Hellenes, for whose use during his visits to Copenhagen they have hitherto been reserved. The flat previously designed for the use of Prince and Princess Charles was somewhat high, whereas the rooms that they will now occupy are on the ground floor, and this will be much more convenient in every way. It is unlikely that they will remain away from England for long, although "some months" is vaguely stated to be the proposed duration of their visit.

STATISTICS.

In Italy there are more theatres in proportion to the population than in any other country.

TRAPDOORS were the invention of either the Indians or the Chinese, and are of uncertain antiquity. They came to Europe with tea in 1610.

THE Queen now rules 367,000,000 people, a greater number than has ever before acknowledged the sovereignty of either a king, queen, or emperor.

INDIANA produces 130,000,000 bushels of corn, 40,000,000 of wheat, 48,000,000 of oats, and over 1,000,000 tons of timothy. It has 10,000,000 fruit trees, bearing 38,000,000 bushels of apples, and 4,000,000 bushels of peaches.

THE number of hairs on the human scalp varies from 90,000 to 120,000. A single hair can support a weight of two ounces, and is so elastic that it may be stretched one-third of its entire length, and then regain its former size and condition.

CAREFUL weighing shows that an ordinary bee, not loaded, weighs the five-thousandth part of a pound, so that it takes five thousand bees to make a pound. But the loaded bee, when he comes in fresh from the fields and flowers, loaded with honey or bee-bread, weighs nearly three times more.

GEMS.

LOVE is the greatest and grandest foundation-stone upon which the human character is built. Lacking it, a man is a moral zero.

UNDUE prostration indicates that a man does not see his way clearly; undue precipitation that he does not see it all.

WE have neither leisure nor responsibility for weighing in the scales of our personal moral judgment everything that happens; what is not our business we had best leave to those whose business it is.

HUMAN strength can be earned through human energy. It is not always a gift which nature showers upon some and denies to others, but is often a gradual development in the individual, progressing in accordance with the active efforts and earnest struggles which he puts forth from day to day.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

PLUM DUMPLING.—Sift three cupfuls of flour with two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, and cut into it a heaping teaspoonful of butter; make a soft dough and stir in a cupful of plums, either stewed or canned. Steam in cups set in a pan of hot water. Serve with liquid sauce.

CREAM BISCUIT.—Sift one pint of flour, one level teaspoonful of salt and two teaspoonfuls of baking powder. Mix with enough sweet cream to make a soft dough. Roll out, cut in rounds, and bake in a very hot oven. Use pastry flour for baking powder biscuits.

COLD TOMATO CATSUP.—One peck tomatoes, peeled without scalding. Chop fine, put in a thin bag, and let drain till the water is well out. Mix with one cupful of chopped onions, one cupful of vinegar, one-half cupful salt, one tablespoonful of celery seed, one and one-half cupfuls brown sugar, one teaspoonful of cinnamon, pepper to taste. Bottle and seal. This will keep well.

CONFECTIONERY MADE EASY is the title of a little book now in its nineteenth edition, published by Dean and Son, 160A, Fleet Street, E.C., and containing useful and practical information which every housewife can make use of, and which will also enable her to vary the daily bill of fare in a way that cannot fail to be acceptable to those for whom she provides.

MISCELLANEOUS.

In India and the East Indies the natives mix white ants with flour, and make them into pastry, which is considered to be highly nutritious.

TUMBLERS of nearly the same shape and dimensions as those employed to-day have been found in great numbers in Pompeii. They were of gold, silver, glass, agate, marble, and other semi-precious stones.

THE Chinese burglar takes an ingredient of his own, burns it, and blows the smoke through the keyhole of the bedroom where the master of the house is asleep. The fumes dull the senses of the victim just enough to make him helpless while at the same time permitting him to see and hear everything that goes on in the room. The only antidote against this charm is pure water, and most of the wealthy Chinese folk sleep with a basin of this near their heads.

It is a favourite theory with the fishing and seafaring people on the north-east of Scotland that in a storm three waves are strong and violent, while the fourth is comparatively weak and less dangerous. This succession they call a "rote of waves." Fishermen returning from their fishing-ground often prove by experience the truth of their theory, and hang back as they come near the shore to take advantage of the lull that follows, they say, pretty regularly after three big breakers.

A FACT that has recently come to light shows a new use to which human hair has been put. During the last year or two tons of hair have been packed between the plates of a certain part of war vessels. Hair is very elastic, and thus affords a most effective backing to metal. Again, it is being used very satisfactorily to form a kind of fender which is thrown over the side of a vessel to prevent her scraping against the dock—to take the place, in fact, of more commonly used rope coils.

SANITATION has proved that the use of gas in bedrooms is unwise, as it consumes too much oxygen. If, therefore, it is lighted before the occupants retire, they will find the atmosphere vitiated when they do so. It is a great mistake to believe that the amount of the vitiation is of no consequence because the flame is small. The combustion which is an incident of a small flame means that, instead of carbonic acid and water, the air becomes loaded with partially-burnt hydrocarbons and other noxious products.

THE inhabitants of the small group of islands situated on the south of Iceland possess a very curious method of communication in their so-called "bottle post." When the wind blows from the south, and one of the islanders wishes to communicate with the mainland, he puts his letters into a well-corked bottle, and to insure their delivery he encloses at the same time a plug of twist tobacco or a cigar. The wind speedily impels the bottle to the shore of the mother island, where people are generally on the look out who are willing to deliver the contents of the bottle in return for the enclosed remuneration.

In casting steel there has always been more or less difficulty from the tendency of the melted metal to splash. This produces flaws and cracks on the surface of the ingots used for forging guns. These ingots weigh five tons and upward. It is naturally arises that such a large quantity of metal falling from a height into the moulds would splatter and splash. The particles thrown off cool rapidly and are productive of a great deal of trouble. By a new and simple method this is prevented. A tube is prepared of thin sheet iron, such as is used for roofing. The tube is twenty-four inches in inside diameter, and is suspended from an iron ring, to which there are riveted three bars on the surface of the mould. The steel is poured from the bottom of the ladle into the middle of the iron tube. All the splashes are thrown on the walls of the tube, which gradually melts away during the rise of the surface of the liquid steel in the mould. It is by such little devices as this that a great deal of time, trouble and work is saved.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MAR. G. S., Ohio.—Your dollar note duly received.
AMOR.—It is against our rule to give trade addresses.
LADYBIRD.—Portsmouth is seventy-four miles from London.
INQUIRER.—The document seems to be sufficient for a will.
INQUIRITIVE.—We have not the information asked for.
WORRIED.—You are entitled to a month's notice of the advance.
ROMANCER.—The Crown jewels are in the Tower of London.
PATRIOT.—Nelson was killed at Trafalgar on the 21st October, 1805.
ROLLING STONE.—Information might be got from English General of Shipping, Custom House, London.
DUNCE.—A will must bear the testator's own signature, or if he be illiterate, his properly attested mark.
IGNORANT.—Say "Sir," in writing to anyone with whom you are not on terms of familiarity.
WOULD-BE SECRETARY.—A secretary requires a knowledge of correspondence and book-keeping.
ALIX.—H.M.S. *Victoria* sunk 22nd June, 1893; 290 men out of 600 crew were drowned.
SISTER-IN-LAW.—It is not the law in England for a man to marry his deceased wife's sister yet.
PAY.—To do an small quantity properly would cost you five times their value.
UNLUCKY.—We should think one year was as good as another for this interesting ceremony.
ANXIOUS ONE.—You could prosecute for obtaining money by false pretences.
ROMANCO.—Surely there must have been something which has slipped your memory.
ANGLER.—Catching fish by a rod or line, called angling, is of very ancient derivation.
SAVVY.—Wipe dry, brush over with arsenical soap, and keep stretched over cotton wool or tow till cured.
LITTLE SUMMER.—You cannot paint a dye on with "outward application only," such as you propose.
POPE.—He was born in 1783, and ten years later succeeded to the papacy through the death of his great-grand-uncle.
TICKER.—Sanitary authorities who take away clothes to be disinfected must bring them back to your house when the operation is completed.
JOCK.—Impossible to say without knowing what caused the statu. If it penetrates through to remove it would probably destroy the character of the coat.
GRIN.—Anyone who sails from one country to another with an intention to remain there is an emigrant.
ADDITION.—You must follow the usual course—join as a clerk, if possible, and work your way up; the company prefer to train their own cashiers.
LITERATEUR.—The quicker you disabuse your mind of such nonsense the better for all who take a true interest in your welfare.
CURIO.—In every large town there are numbers of curiosity shops where old furniture, silver, &c., are bought and sold.
P. W. H.—Two tablespoonfuls of prepared powdered borax will soften a pall of water, and being a good detergent greatly helps in the washing.
SISTER.—A woman cannot, in this country, marry the widower of her deceased half-sister; nor, if celebrated abroad, is the marriage legal in this country.
MATEK.—Calico will not answer, very fine linen is best. See that the paste is not lumpy and lay it on evenly but sparingly.
FOZELING.—As near as can be expressed, "St. Leger" is pronounced "Sollenger," as the family name of St. John is commonly pronounced "Sinjin."
POVER.—The first consonant is not pronounced at all. The *h* has the sound of the long *i*, as in "strate," and the final *e* that of the short *y*, as in "fancy."
CAREFUL MAN.—Too difference between what is asked and what is offered may not repay you for the trouble of an action, but that is for you to judge.
COUNTRY COUSIN.—We do not advise one who is comfortably off in the country to come to London, unless he has a permanent situation waiting for him.
NEVION.—The cheeks become pale from fast because the mental emotion diminishes the action of the heart and lungs, and impedes the circulation.
LITTLE HOUSEWIFE.—When they are ironed put a few drops of glycerine in a very little water, put your damp rag in this and lightly sponge over the linen, then polish with a nice, hot polishing iron, and on rather a hard board.
CHINESE.—In China there are three forms of religious belief—the Confucian, the Buddhist, and the Taoist. They may be considered the national religions, as they are believed in more or less by the great mass of the people.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—Send to Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster, S.W., for list of subjects, and when next examination is to take place; all gratis.

ONE IN DIFFICULTY.—To commence your married career with the burden of debt would be a terrible mistake—one which might render your life one of discomfort and misery.

F. M.—If a physician fails to officially report a case, it is then the duty of the undertaker to report to the coroner, who must hold an inquest over the body and ascertain the cause of death.

FACE.—A black-eyed person is one with a dark complexion—vis being from the same root as view, the covering which the knight in armour let down over his face.

BROKEN-HEARTED BEER.—When he shows by his acts that he is really contrite you can forgive him, with the understanding that if he repeats his folly, as he calls it, the engagement between you will be broken for ever.

EXCUSE ME.—Do not dream of giving up a certain means of livelihood for such a mere chance. Make a few experiments in that direction if you like, but let them be made in the leisure which your business affords.

T. V.—Until affairs are somewhat more settled in that quarter of the globe we think that one burdened as you are with a wife and family should hesitate about venturing into it in search of fortune.

ON A PAIR OF BLACK EYES.

I CONSULTED the spirits that dwell in your eyes. And the two wicked sprites I took quite by surprise. When I asked them in tones full of wonder and awe, The cause of the mischievous lights that I saw.

The sprites laughed and replied, "Tis for you to observe; Gaze straight into these eyes; let your glance never swerve."

So I looked for a moment therein to behold A thread spun so finely of glittering gold, Only those in close league with the sprites could divine, And you know that that privilege just then was mine.

"With the soul is connected this delicate wire, And there is stored up all the mischievous fire; With feminine eyes at the negative pole, An electrical charge travels out from the soul, And the bright inner light can its sparkle transmit As direct to the eyes the fond message will fit."

"When we wish to play havoc with fair maidens' hearts We pull the cord quickly, and straightaway there darts A spark that can kill with its mischievous glow, As fatal as arrows from Love's famous bow, When the eye gazeth softly, the bright lights we turn, And a fire is kindled that gently will burn."

I asked of the sprites where they longest thrive, The climatic conditions that best make them thrive. "Tis the seashore and mountains and nooks of romance, 'Tis there we are happy, we revel and dance; And like will-o'-the-wisps we show best in the night, For the darkness around us makes brighter our light."

My glance I withdrew as I trembled and thought Of the fearful destruction those eyes must have wrought; And thanks to the sprites whom I took by surprise, I can safely steer clear of those wicked black eyes.

MOLLIE.—The expense of wedding-carriages is usually borne by the bride's father or relatives.

R. C.—Fresh fish should not be soaked in water before cooking; this treatment only ruins the flavour, and makes it soft.

ANXIOUS SISTER.—The only certain cure for drunkenness is the determination of the victim to abandon drink and remain sober in future.

KARE.—Copal varnish would make the cork impervious to water, but then it might make the cork useless for the purpose it has to fulfil.

MEXICA.—Clean it with a liquid paste made of alcohol and whiting. A little of this mixture will remove specks, and impart a high lustre to the glass.

CONSTANCE.—A very good thing for your floor is to give it a good wash after you have lifted the carpet, and then brush the seams of the floor with either turpentine or paraffin. Of course, in using these you must take great care of fire till it has been washed over again.

DARK-EYED LANE.—If one habitually has such shadows under the eyes it indicates nothing, and should excite no comment. Some persons have these shadows all their lives. Under such circumstances there is no remedy. If they come from ill-health, a tonic is sometimes beneficial.

TAREY.—There must not be two authorities in the house over one child. In case the elder sister is the chief guardian and caretaker of the younger, it is well to insist upon obedience; but the same punishment the better, under any circumstances, and especially if there is more than one person to give orders.

FRESH FIELDS.—You should apply yourself to learning dressmaking or acquiring a good knowledge of cooking; in either line you might reasonably hope to succeed well in the colonies; but to go out on the chance of obtaining musical pupils or work in an office or shop is a course that we cannot recommend.

HEARTBROKEN MAUD.—There can scarcely be anything more humiliating to a young girl than to have the man to whom she is engaged, and who has given her to understand that he is solicitous of an early marriage, to keep postponing it. As you state that he can have no valid reason for so doing, we advise you to inform him that you no longer feel bound by the engagement.

A BASHFUL READER.—Bashfulness is largely due to a lack of self-control and to a morbid degree of personal vanity, whereby the sufferer is continually criticising himself and wondering how he appears in the eyes of others. The remedies are simple, being merely a steady effort of the will for self-government and a more frequent intercourse with good society.

LAGUON.—It would be far better to take a course in physical training of some sort, or to row, or ride a bicycle provided the correct posture was maintained. It is often the case with young persons who grow rapidly that their muscles do not grow strong as fast as their size increases. They therefore feel weak and sometimes languid, and lack the spirit and elasticity that should characterize youth and fairly good health.

PCFVV.—There is an idea prevailing in the minds of some men that a woman should never show her feelings for him. The moment she does so she loses her charm for him. Too little demonstration chills and disheartens. Too much warms and disgusts. The sum and substance of the whole matter is that it depends a great deal upon the young persons themselves whether they can safely be demonstrative or not.

TITA.—Do not let soap touch it, as that would fix the stain. Spread the stained part out a basin, and pour clean soft boiling water through it. If the stains do not move under this treatment, rub in a little powdered borax, and pour on more boiling water. Some find it well to apply a mixture of glycerine and egg yolk to the stain, and then wash out with warm water. After the stain is removed put the article to soak.

LOTTIE.—Select as perfect bunches as possible. Wash them thoroughly and drain through a colander. Mix the well-beaten whites of eggs with water, allowing one tablespoonful to each white of egg. Dip each bunch in this. Hang by the stem until they have drained a little, then roll them in powdered sugar and lay them on white paper, and when dry roll again in eggs, then in sugar, repeating the process until they are satisfactorily frosted.

PICKLED ONIONS.—Peel one pound of small onions, put in strong acid water for a day, changing water once; drain onions, put in a pan with a little water and milk and bring to boil for five minutes, then lay in a cloth to dry, covering with another cloth; when dry and cold put in bottle; boil breakfast cupful of white vinegar, teaspoonful of peppercorns, and a little ginger, and pour over the onions; when cold, cork; ready in a month.

J. A. C.—Take four potatoes, well boiled, and mash them well, then add some pepper and salt and the yolk of an egg, stirring over the fire till the egg is cooked, turn the whole out on a plate, then take a bit and roll it in the hand like a small apple or like a cork, break it over with the white of the egg beaten a little, and roll it in fine bread crumbs, drop them into smoking hot fat and fry yellow; cold potatoes may be used for this.

CONSTANT READER.—Cut the pork in the form you wish, dry the salt, and to every pound of salt allow one teaspoonful of saltpetre and two ounces of sugar, mix them, and rub the pork with this into every cut or crevice; lay it on a board or trough, pack another on top with salt between, put a cloth over it and a heavy weight on the top. Repeat the rubbing every week for four weeks, at the last time you may add a little ginger or spice, and rub in well, then it is ready for making into bacon.

A. B. C.—Take a fine firm cauliflower (or two if they are small) and break it neatly into branches, which put into a basin, and after sprinkling liberally with salt, pour boiling water over them, cover with a plate, and let them stand till next day; then drain carefully, and spread them on a clean cloth, spread another over the top, and let them stand so a day to dry; boil a breakfastcupful of white vinegar, with a teaspoonful of peppercorns, a small bit of ginger, a blade of mace, pour it boiling over the cauliflower, and when cold cork tight. It is best to put pickles either in a stone jar or glass bottle; the cauliflower is good to use soon.

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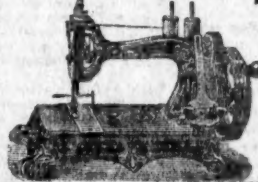
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